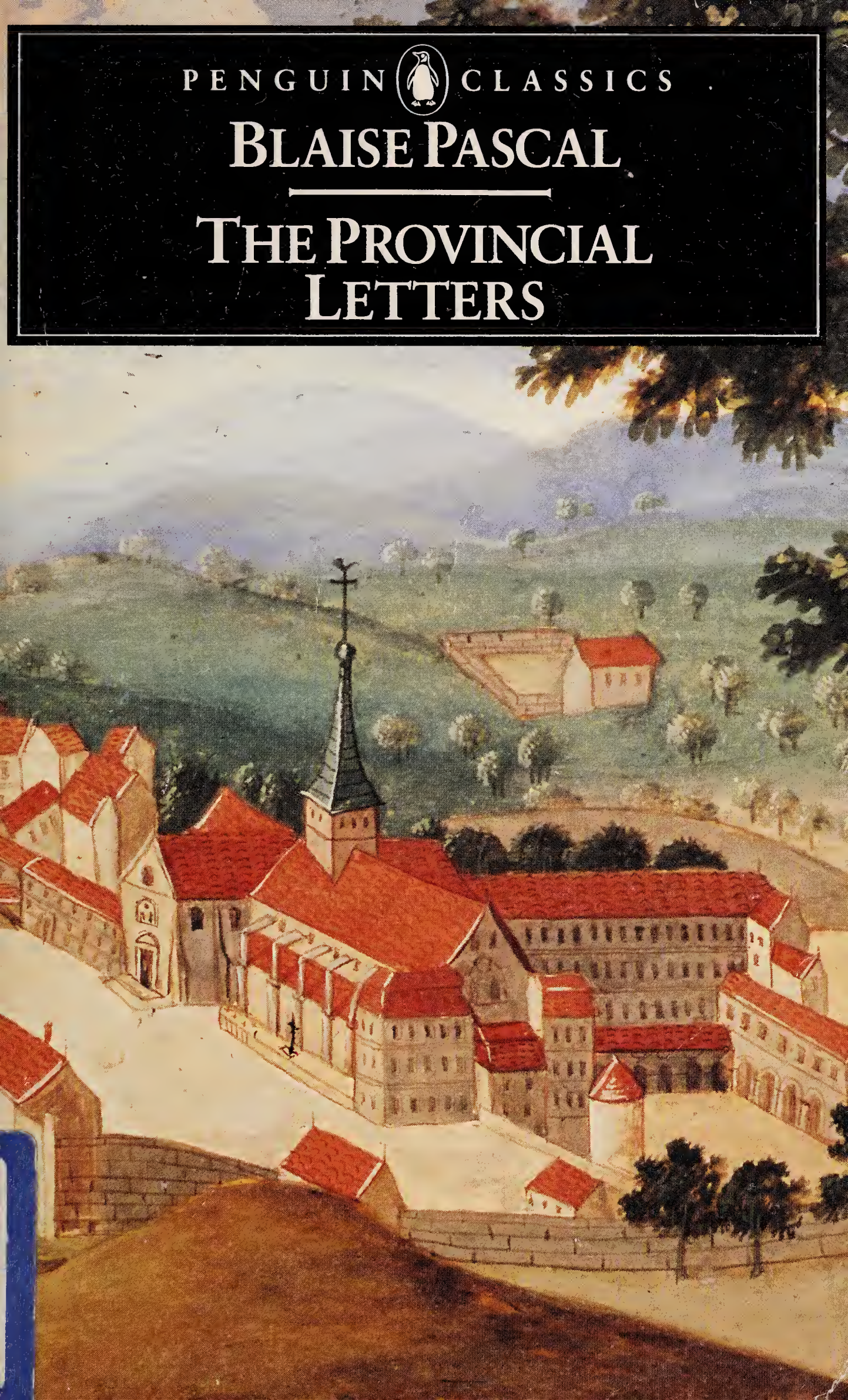
PENGUIN CLASSICS

BLAISE PASCAL

THE PROVINCIAL LETTERS



PENGUIN CLASSICS

THE PROVINCIAL LETTERS

Blaise Pascal was born in Clermont in 1623, the son of a government official. During his short life he left his mark on mathematics, physics, religious controversy and literature. A convert to Jansenism, he engaged with gusto in a controversy with the Jesuits, which gave rise to his *Lettres Provinciales* on which, with the *Pensées*, his literary fame chiefly rests. A remarkable stylist, he is regarded by many as the greatest of French prose artists. He died, after a long illness, in 1662.

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PASCAL
THE PROVINCIAL LETTERS

Translated with an introduction by
A. J. Krailsheimer

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INTRODUCTION

I

In presenting the *Provincial Letters* to modern readers it is hard to avoid a defensive note. It is no doubt going too far to speak of a neglected masterpiece, but it is certainly true that a work which enjoyed phenomenal success in its own day, and for long afterwards, has today been so eclipsed by the *Pensées* in public esteem that it seems never likely again to rival the latter as a best-seller. This is understandable and indeed inevitable, in view of the changing needs and tastes of a now vast and voracious reading public. At the same time the *Provincial Letters* offer more of both pleasure and profit than sales figures would suggest. As a work of literature they mark a milestone in the development of French, and can be enjoyed for their style alone. Moreover each letter is self-contained in a way that all too few of the *Pensées* are. It goes without saying that the *Letters* cast light on the *Pensées* but above all they show a great man at full stretch, evolving and reacting under the stress of intensely felt emotions and considerable personal risk. They should be read for their own sake, and not just as prolegomena to the *Pensées*, still less as second best.

It is right to acknowledge the difficulties at once. The appearance of many pages of the book is not inviting to the reader for whom academic and enjoyable are antitheses: there are strings of complicated references, lengthy quotations, too often in Latin, hosts of unfamiliar names and a general air of somewhat rebarbative technicality. Worse, the book deals with moral and theological questions with what appears to be intimidating expertise and unmistakably close argument. There are bound to be some, too, whose religious allegiance makes them hesitate to become involved in a controversy on which authority has unambiguously pronounced; Jansenism is still a

bogey to many sincere believers. For all these, and other, reasons some people will always be kept by inertia or prejudice from reading the *Letters*; this is a pity, for the reward far outweighs the effort and the dangers, it is hardly necessary to add, are not such in fact as to alarm the most devoutly orthodox.

The *Provincial Letters* tell us as no other document can about Pascal himself, about the moral and religious values of his time and, not least, about human motives and methods in defending interests which in three centuries have gained rather than lost in actuality for us. They represent the satirical genre at its best, and aroused the admiration even of the great master of the craft, Voltaire; they are both extremely funny and extremely moving; they expressly set out to explain to the lay reader in terms he can easily grasp issues normally obscured by technical jargon. Much of the academic paraphernalia is window dressing, and little history and less theology is needed for a modern reader to appreciate and enjoy what is going on in the *Letters*. Though they are part of the history, and conscience, of France, the English were quick to admire them (they were translated in 1657 only months after publication) and there has never been anything parochial about their appeal. With present interest in new moralities of one sort or another they have indeed become topical once more.

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The Reformation of the sixteenth century and the Counter Reformation set on foot by the Council of Trent are the immediate antecedents to the Jansenist–Jesuit controversy of the following century, in which the *Provincial Letters* mark a decisive phase. The Reformers had protested against what they regarded as superstitions and abuses within the Church, and had gone further by denouncing and replacing the theology which, in their view, made such abuses possible, if not inevitable. Like

all rebels, they went to extremes, and in the name of evangelical purity swept away most of the devotional practices which had grown up over the centuries, rejected the existing structure of authority and set up a theology of grace which stressed the fewness of the elect, the unearned and gratuitous nature of divine grace and the corruption of man. In France, where Calvinism was the prevailing form of Protestantism, rigour of doctrine, puritanical morals and dour piety had come to be associated with heresy. When the Society of Jesus (founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1534, given papal approval in 1540) found themselves designated as the shock troops of the Counter Reformation it was natural that they should react against the rigorism and pessimism of the Protestants. Their doctrine of Molinism, still approved in the Catholic Church, originated with the Spanish Jesuit Molina in 1588. Instead of stressing man's corruption this doctrine allows to man's genuinely free will and unaided efforts a major role in effecting his salvation, thus minimizing man's dependence on grace and maximizing the value of works and free will.

With the spectacular spread of the Society (by 1616, fifty years after Ignatius's death, the original seven founding members had become 13,000), Molinism had become a doctrine to be reckoned with, all the more as the Jesuits soon specialized in education, winning high regard for their work in schools and universities. Numerous converts testified to the efficacy of their new methods, and heresy was effectively contained. Not all Catholics, however, were happy to see the pendulum swing quite so far, and many thought that excessive rigour was not best answered by laxity. Among those resolved to bring the Church back on to a wiser course were Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638), who became Bishop of Ypres in his native Flanders in 1636, and Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (1581–1643), known as the abbé de Saint-Cyran (from the abbey of which he was commendatory head). Already as students at Louvain, and for many years thereafter, the two planned their campaign of

reform, directed mainly against the Jesuits and their methods, but also designed to destroy the Protestant case by putting the Church above criticism. They were both convinced that the solution was to be found in St Augustine, the greatest authority on grace, and Jansenius's contribution was a massive study of the saint's thought, published posthumously in 1640 as the *Augustinus*. Saint-Cyran had helped his friend in compiling this work, but his main influence lay not so much in any formal writing as in his work as spiritual director. He, too, taught a stern Augustinianism, basing a very real spirituality on discipline and making no concessions to worldliness. Falling foul of Richelieu (for political rather than doctrinal reasons) he spent some five years in the Bastille, and on Richelieu's death was released, only to die a few weeks later, but even in prison he continued to exercise a profound influence on a large number of persons, both clerical and lay.

In 1636 he had become spiritual director to the community of Port-Royal. These nuns, originally Cistercian but then made autonomous, had moved some years earlier from Port-Royal-des-Champs, in the valley of the Chevreuse near Paris, to a site in the capital (now a hospital), and under the energetic leadership of their abbess, Mother Angélique Arnauld, became renowned for their piety.

Under Saint-Cyran's influence the convent became the spiritual headquarters of what came to be called Jansenism, and it was also due to him that a small number of men moved into the buildings vacated at Port-Royal-des-Champs, taking no vows, but living a life of seclusion in community. These 'Messieurs de Port-Royal' or solitaries, as they came to be known, included several of the vast Arnauld clan, and were almost all men of considerable culture, and it was not long before they were prevailed upon to open a school, which became immensely successful and numbered Racine among its pupils. It is only to these two communities of nuns and solitaries, with their resident dependents, that the name 'Port-Royal'

can properly be applied, though it is often used as a loose synonym for the whole party of Jansenists.

Not surprisingly, the publication of the *Augustinus* caused a stir, though debate was to some extent inhibited by a papal order, still in force, which had forbidden further disputes on the question of grace after twenty years of wrangling between Molinists and Thomists (1607). By the time argument got fully under way Saint-Cyran was dead, and the new champion was his disciple, Antoine Arnauld, brother of Mother Angélique and youngest of twenty children. Both sides welcomed a trial of strength, and eventually the whole Faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne was involved. It was obviously in the interests of the Church, still locked in battle against heresy, that this internal matter should be finally settled one way or another, and to that end the Sorbonne sent to Rome seven (soon reduced to five) propositions, allegedly extracted from Jansenius's book, for authoritative judgement. After the usual delays, in 1653 Innocent X took the decisive step of censuring these propositions as heretical, in themselves, however, and not specifically as part of Jansenius's doctrine.

From this point on the debate became increasingly unreal. Arnauld had no choice but to bow to the Pope's formal ruling, and accordingly condemned the propositions as heretical, but denied that they were in Jansenius, thus creating the distinction between law (*droit*) and fact (*fait*) which was to bedevil the whole dispute for years. He admitted the Pope's right to pronounce finally on questions of faith, but claimed that on matters of fact he is as liable to err as anyone else, and can therefore be challenged on, for example, the accuracy of quotations. It is empirically verifiable that only the first of the Five Propositions (which henceforth deserve capitals) is textually in Jansenius, and in a dubious context at that, but it is equally verifiable that the theses defended by later Jansenists are virtually indistinguishable from these, which still officially constitute the formal content of the Jansenist heresy. Not for

the first time in history, a little more precision in drafting would have prevented a conflict, or at any rate such a conflict as developed.

If Arnauld had let well alone at this stage he might yet have won a modest victory, but he was not of a pacific nature. Early in 1655 the duc de Liancourt, an old friend of Port-Royal, was refused the sacrament at Saint-Sulpice (incidentally not by a Jesuit) for his Jansenist sympathies. Arnauld at once launched into print with two open letters, of which the second (*Second Letter . . . to a Duke and Peer:* July 1655) was a book of some 200 pages. In these he reopened the questions of law and fact, made highly provocative remarks about his opponents and, most imprudent of all, reiterated unequivocally Jansenist views on grace. His enemies were not slow to react, and in December Arnauld was formally arraigned before the Faculty under circumstances which made censure almost inescapable. A few weeks later, with judgement expected any day, appeared the first of the *Provincial Letters*.

3

Pascal's own connexions with Jansenism went back to 1646, when his family had been won over by disciples of Saint-Cyran at Rouen. His sister, Jacqueline, had been more deeply affected than Blaise, and in 1652, a year after their father's death, she became a nun at Port-Royal. At first Pascal took this very badly, but in November 1654 he had the religious experience known as his '*nuit de feu*' which resulted in his total conversion and made him a devoted ally of Port-Royal, though he was never at any time more than a transient guest there. In the course of a visit to Port-Royal-des-Champs in January 1656 he was persuaded to see what he could do to retrieve Arnauld's desperate situation. Well known in society for his brilliant work in science and mathematics, friendly with the circle of the duc de Roannez, Pascal was far more in touch with the realities of

worldly life than either the solitaries, who had forsaken it, or Arnauld, who was too much of a scholar to make much appeal to the wider public. At the same time, Pascal was not a professional theologian (though he was a highly competent amateur), and the very talents which made him such an effective advocate before a lay audience obliged him to rely on his more expert friends for technical advice. If Arnauld and Nicole had supplied him with different ammunition, he might have written differently, but like any other advocate he made the best of the material at his disposal, choosing the line of attack most likely to prove his opponents vulnerable and always taking care not to compromise the defence of his own side.

The consequence of Pascal's intervention was to bring the debate into an arena where the ordinary person could feel directly involved. Although it is necessary for comprehension of the *Letters* to know something of the rival theories of grace, the Five Propositions and so on, Pascal's argument is accessible to all, and exposes the real issues behind the technicalities. For one thing Pascal and his sister had not been converted to a belief in five, or any other number of propositions; Jansenism and Port-Royal meant for them a way of life, a set of people, a system of priorities, moral and spiritual. For another, the Jesuits, rightly or wrongly, represented for them a powerful and mysterious body using questionable means to achieve domination of Church and state for ends only dimly discernible to outsiders. Pascal had so recently been converted to total commitment to God, in the context of Port-Royal, that he inevitably idealized his own side, and the needs of polemic still further accentuated the stark contrasts of his black and white picture.

Arnauld, for Pascal, was not the disputatious and recalcitrant sectarian denounced by his enemies, but the brother of his sister's saintly superior, a man of deep piety and sound learning, author of a precious guide to the spiritual life, *De la fréquente communion* (1643). This treatise stressed the need for adequate

preparation before receiving the sacrament, even recommending a period of abstention from it at moments of spiritual disorder, and had led to more than one public clash of opinions between Jansenist and Jesuit confessors. Port-Royal, for Pascal, was no hotbed of heresy, but a place where the Catholic religion was lived out with exemplary piety by nuns who had forsaken the world in order to pray, not to argue, and by solitaries who only left their meditations to help in the school or tend the garden. All this talk of heresy, Five Propositions, and distinctions of law and fact concealed the fundamental issue, as he saw it: must Christianity come to terms with the world he had himself renounced or must the purity of the Gospel be preserved at all costs?

Similarly he came to see in the Jesuits all the forces against which the true Christian must fight. Hair-splitting, dishonest, hypocritical, impious, wicked, so runs the catalogue of progressively graver charges against them, but Pascal's antipathy was merely exacerbated, not caused, by polemic; its origins lie in his conversion, or conversions. For him Christianity was incompatible with service to Mammon, and Mammon was the worldly life he had known so well. For whatever reason, the Jesuits were publicly committed to a course of action amongst worldly people which certainly did not have the effect, though it may have had the intention, of making them less worldly. Worldly, of course, is a relative term; what Pascal had abandoned was not all worldly goods – he lived modestly, even frugally, but never poorly – nor the more conspicuous vices – there is no sign that lechery, drunkenness or gambling ever tempted him – but the heedless pursuit of enjoyment, vanity, self-interest, all that he later stigmatized in the *Pensées* as symptoms of man's fallen nature. He believed that religion should make man uneasy, not lull him into comfortable complacency. Thus the moral problems of laxity and worldliness had always been more immediately pressing for him than theological questions of grace, with which they are,

of course, inextricably bound up. Similarly, if Arnauld had not been both outmanoeuvred and outnumbered Pascal would not have had to dwell so much on the nature of the Jesuits' power and policy.

Thus personal considerations largely determined Pascal's line of approach, and made him see things somewhat differently from his friends. It is precisely because obscure, though important, issues of theology were translated into terms of personal conviction and emotion that the *Provincial Letters* were so successful, and are still read long after all the other documents in the case, from both sides, have been forgotten. As the *Letters* proceed one can see the evolution not only of his style and technique, but also of his own attitude to all the issues involved. The consequences of attacking or defending particular positions made him realize what was at stake, for himself as much as for his friends and the whole Church.

4

It should be obvious from what has been said that Pascal did not intend the *Letters* to be a contribution to literature but to a cause. He wanted them to be read, therefore they had to be readable; he possessed a natural gift of style, therefore they are well written. This, however, does not explain why one can still take delight in reading about the discomfiture of Jesuits or the vindication of Jansenists; after all, the Jansenists have long since disappeared and the Jesuits are more flourishing than ever. To be effective polemical works must be topical, but once the battle has been lost or won the topicality rapidly fades. The sort of satire that survives is most often that which is cloaked in fantasy, like *Gulliver's Travels* or *Candide*, or which attacks perennial follies rather than individual ideas or persons, like Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. The *Provincial Letters* stand almost alone in being quite specific in their targets and yet retaining their interest over the centuries. The late Jean Steinmann makes

he point in his recent edition of the *Letters* that they mark the birth of journalism as we know it today, with all its techniques of interview and reportage, and the comparison is both apt and helpful in putting Pascal's achievement into perspective. With all the resources of modern journalism, Zola, for instance, played very much the same role in the Dreyfus *affaire* as Pascal in that of Port-Royal, but even while new accounts of the *affaire* continue to appear the popularity of Zola's novels induces very few readers ever to look at his historic articles.

The most effective weapon of the satirist is ridicule, not denunciation, and in polemic it is as important to win support for one's own cause as to alienate sympathy for one's opponent. In his very title Pascal indicates how he intends to combine these aims (though he later claimed that the printer had invented it) and in the very first line he strikes the note of irony disguised as naïveté which runs through the first ten *Letters*. In his assumed character of puzzled bystander, and maintaining an anonymity which was only officially broken after his death, Pascal sets out to explain to his friend, remote from the gossip and excitement of Parisian life, what is really going on at the Sorbonne. Extraordinary measures have been taken, speeches restricted in length, the assembly packed with religious not normally entitled to vote, sessions presided over by the Chancellor himself, and all to secure the condemnation of Arnauld on a point which turns out to be devoid of substance. Like any modern reporter Pascal then goes round to spokesmen for the various parties concerned in the dispute to see whether they can make things any clearer. Unable to avert Arnauld's disgrace, Pascal sets out to demonstrate the absurdity of the situation, by trapping the experts into self-contradiction and total confusion over terms. It is the old story of the emperor's clothes all over again; in order to secure Arnauld's defeat Thomists and Molinists have made common cause with a great display of mutual reconciliation and harmony, but once con-

fronted by this apparently innocent interviewer their representatives betray the still incompatible beliefs concealed behind the unanimously professed formulae. The Thomists, especially the Dominicans, who were committed as an order to St Thomas, turn out to be in agreement with Arnauld on everything except the use of terms, and to agree with the Molinists, especially the Jesuits, their recent enemies, on nothing but the use of terms. Making the most of 'a proximate power' which means nothing, 'a sufficient grace' that does not suffice and so on, Pascal makes the whole debate appear both frivolous and squalid; frivolous because the basic truths of religion are not meant for such exhibitions of mere verbal juggling, squalid because the Thomists, guardians of orthodoxy, have thrown in their lot with the Molinists, and compromised all their principles out of personal spite against Arnauld. In the early *Letters* the writer's Jansenist friend is distinguished above all for his earnest and frank approach, so that he alone of all the theologians consulted says in forthright language just what he means, while the others take refuge in jargon.

The dramatic form of these dialogues brings out better than could any direct comment the characters of the different parties, and appealed at once to readers bored and bewildered by technicalities about grace but well able to recognize human motives when they saw them. Behind the comedy there is also a good deal of solid argument, from Scripture and the Fathers, because it is no part of Pascal's intention, despite Jesuit charges to the contrary, to bring serious matters into contempt by laughing at them. Even in this he was subtly flattering his readers' vanity, for they had the feeling that with ordinary common sense and good will they were as well qualified as the professionals to fathom the mysteries of the faith which, after all, they all professed. Pascal did not invent the appeal to the common man, for Calvin and Descartes, to name only the most famous, had already shown that neither in theology nor philosophy is learning essential for wisdom, but even Descartes

at his sprightliest lacks the sustained irony and insistent lucidity of these first *Letters*.

Between publication of the *Third* and *Fourth Letters* Arnauld was degraded and expelled from the Sorbonne (15 February 1656) and Pascal therefore modified his tactics. Faced with the triumph of this uneasy coalition, Pascal determined to make it a Pyrrhic victory for the Jesuits, and swung into an attack on a front much wider than the original emergency had permitted. The first three *Letters* are brilliant skirmishing in a rearguard action, the next seven a counter-attack pressed home with devastating results. Continuing the interview technique, Pascal brings on the scene for the first time a real Jesuit. It is a measure of his skill as a writer that one never finds oneself disliking the good-natured, credulous, absurd representative of a Society whose activities seem to be more sinister and disreputable on every page. At the end it is the interviewer, not the Jesuit, who breaks off the conversations in disgust. No outright criticism could have achieved such effective results as this ironic treatment of 'the good Father'.

This second series of interviews continues the theme of grace, but almost at once turns to an examination of Jesuit teaching on sin. From now on it is the practical moral consequences of their theological doctrine which occupy Pascal's attention. The advantages of this shift of emphasis are obvious; it is all very well making fun of hair-splitting theologians, but too much comedy of this kind would lay its author open to the very charge of frivolity which he imputed to his enemies (and they to him). Moreover, too much was at stake for Pascal to risk getting bogged down in technical arguments about grace while he could not fail to arouse interest in moral questions of direct concern to all his readers. It was partly a 'by their fruits ye shall know them' argument against the Jesuits, but also, as it developed, a demonstration that their teaching led inevitably to evils which threatened the integrity of the Church and the security of the State. The discussion proceeds from the nature

of grace to the nature of sin, and thence to the discrepancy between what was tolerated by Jesuit authors and the law of the land. The transitions are easily made, and by the *Fifth Letter* Pascal has embarked on a detailed study of Jesuit morality, and specifically of casuistry.

Ever since 1215 the minimum requirement for adult members of the Church had been annual communion (at Easter) obligatorily preceded by confession and absolution. The Council of Trent did not change the formal obligation, but one of the consequences of the Counter Reformation was a tendency towards more frequent communion and confession. From the earliest times manuals had been drawn up for the guidance of confessors, indicating appropriate conduct in difficult cases, regulating penances, laying down conditions for absolution and so on. Like everything else this science of casuistry (that is, study of cases) became more complex in the course of time as new cases created new precedents, so that in the day-to-day execution of their duties, confessors, often men of very modest education, had to rely on the letter of the law when they were not sure of the spirit, and they were only too glad to have such guides. When the Jesuits became confessors to the great and began to move in high society, they were particularly anxious not to dismay their penitents with excessive rigour, and tried to adapt the traditional moral teachings of the Church to the imperious demands of a formally Christian but essentially worldly society. Their casuists began to make concessions to the highly born which lesser beings could not expect to enjoy, but which set a tone. Their moral teaching, and penitential discipline, was based on Probabilism, the theory of probable opinions. In simple terms, this says that in cases of doubt a confessor must follow the opinion of any 'grave' doctor if it favours the penitent, even though most, or all, other opinions are contrary. By thus giving the penitent the benefit of the doubt this doctrine (still officially approved by the Catholic Church) protects him from an error

of human judgement on the part of his confessor which might cause him to be refused absolution and thus be cut off from the sacraments, though it naturally assumes true repentance in the sinner. It was never intended to be an invitation to the confessor, much less the penitent, to twist the facts of a case or ferret out some obscure but favourable opinion, but not surprisingly this is how it came to be used by the unscrupulous and negligent.

Pascal makes capital out of the centralized discipline of the Society, pointing out that no Jesuit can publish without the approval of his superiors, that any opinion so published is, by their definition, grave, and therefore that even the most outrageous opinion once in print can legitimately be quoted in evidence against the Jesuits, even if it commands the support of no one but its author. Using this attractive logic, Pascal is able to introduce Escobar into the *Fifth Letter*, and thereafter to use him constantly. As an anthologist of Jesuit opinions Escobar could not be bettered, and his compendium conveniently saved Pascal (as well as Arnauld and Nicole who kept him supplied with texts) from having to check a multiplicity of references. There is an almost irresistible fascination in collecting howlers of any sort, and it was a stroke of genius on Pascal's part to make his Jesuit spokesman approach casuistry in the spirit of a collector of rare and choice specimens. Ingenuity becomes an end in itself, and the fact that individual consciences and individual salvation are at stake is simply forgotten.

These seven letters thus continue the contrast between the irresponsible frivolity of the Jesuits and the moral earnestness, and even indignation, of the supposedly neutral inquirer (for the Jansenist disappears from the scene). There is also the frequently implied suggestion that the Jesuits are a lot of outlandish foreigners, not to be taken seriously, and, worse still, trying to win ordinary, decent Frenchmen to new and suspect ways. The most famous, and brilliant, thrust is the cacophonous litany of Jesuit authorities offered at the end of the *Fifth Letter*

as replacement for the outmoded Fathers of the Church. Here, as elsewhere, Pascal deftly distorts some names, rearranges them to produce the maximum sound effect and, of course, makes sure that there is no Frenchman among them. Xenophobia is usually near enough the surface to be exploited by skilful propaganda, and Pascal makes the most of it without labouring the point.

Already in the *Sixth Letter*, with the story of Jean d'Alba, Pascal gleefully describes the legal consequences of following Jesuit teaching on the subject of theft, and subsequent letters bring in the much more sensitive topics of duelling and judicial corruption. Such deliberate appeals to the civil arm had long been a commonplace of religious controversy, and Pascal knew as well as his enemies how easily subversion and heresy could be associated once the seed of doubt was sown.

With the *Ninth Letter* he returns to purely religious matters, continuing in the next to show how the most perfunctory devotions can, according to the Jesuits, earn salvation and the most fraudulent confessions absolution. The long series of conversations ends with the Jesuit's revelation that thanks to the Society men are now freed from the onerous obligation of loving God. This is too much for his interlocutor, and the dialogue is not resumed.

The comedy of the interviews is now replaced by mordant irony with less and less light relief. *Letters XI–XVI* are addressed directly to the Jesuits, but to members both more effectual and sinister than their colleague now dismissed from the scene. Indignation and rhetoric are Pascal's chosen weapons in these next six letters, and as his anger becomes deeper, so the quotations from Jesuit authors appear by contrast more cynical and flippant. The sheer bad taste of the ode to Delphine (*Letter XI*) now invites contempt, where earlier it might have raised a laugh.

The keywords of these later letters are 'calumny, slander and lies'. Examining the Jesuits' answers to his charges, Pascal calls

their bluff. Much of the effect of the earlier letters had come from judicious quotation, and it was the Jesuits' case that Pascal had falsified the texts by suppression, distortion or fabrication. He is only too happy to give chapter and verse. The modern reader may well find some of Pascal's quotations too grotesque to be credible, but there remains no room for doubt. He always derives the maximum advantage from a quotation, omitting phrases which might attenuate it, or stressing what will do most damage, often with a word or two of Latin cunningly placed, but he never invents, and never attributes to Jesuits opinions which the context shows them to be refuting. He is harsh, and biased, but he plays fair. In a sense, of course, Escobar had already done the damage by selecting for comment (and not with invariable accuracy) just those opinions which raised the thorniest problems, and Pascal more than once throws Escobar back in the Jesuits' teeth, when they accuse him of misrepresentation. He is careful to give precise references, usually, in the case of casuists, via Escobar, and uses Latin in the most telling way to guarantee the authenticity of his quotations. That he was prepared to think, and prove, the worst of the Jesuits can hardly be denied, but he cannot be accused of bad faith or deliberate misrepresentation. It is important to realize in this connexion that in the seventeenth century neither translation (most of the original texts were in Latin) nor quotation was expected to be literal or accurate; even quoting his own words, or the Bible, where accuracy might seem essential, Pascal seldom takes the trouble to reproduce the precise words.

In drawing on quotations from his enemies to provide the most damning evidence against them Pascal is to some extent continuing the technique employed in the interviews of the earlier letters. In style no less than content the extravagance, bad taste and malice of the Jesuits is all the time contrasted with the plain speaking, righteous indignation and solid orthodoxy, buttressed by quotations from Scripture and the Fathers, of the

defender of Port-Royal. It is particularly noteworthy in this connexion that Pascal completely omits discussion of Jesuit opinions on sexual matters, which would have afforded him ample material of the most sensational kind if he had stooped to use it; not all contemporary writers would have observed such restraint. The affinity between the *Letters* and works of French classical writers has often been noted, and Pascal's style is all the more striking for being juxtaposed with that of such baroque writers as the Jesuits, as a glance at the *Eleventh Letter* will show. The aesthetic austerity of Port-Royal (one thinks of Philippe de Champagne's famous portraits) undoubtedly reflects an austere religion, and it is neither fanciful nor unfair to see in Jesuit churches of the period the image of a more luxuriant (and luxurious) piety. Pascal was an ideal champion for Port-Royal, just because his style was free from the excesses of his friends, whose austerity did not save them from petulance and turgidity. In this way a vivid and unfavourable view of the Jesuits is projected by Pascal's use of quotations, amounting often to something like dialogue, and his own disciplined and easy style wins the reader's sympathy all the more by contrast.

The last two letters are not entertaining, nor are they meant to be. Longer than any of the others, and directly addressed to Father Annat, the King's Jesuit confessor, they offer a reasoned defence of the author himself and of Port-Royal against the charge of heresy which, if sustained, could only prove fatal. The tone is sombre, often sorrowful, relieved only occasionally by shafts of wit, and shows Pascal fighting for spiritual survival, for excommunication to him meant death. Early in the *Seventeenth Letter* he makes his personal profession of faith in solemn and unambiguous terms, declaring his unshakable fidelity to the Catholic Church and the Pope as its head. Later on he is at pains to show that Jansenius's doctrine is the same as that of St Thomas (a significant change of attitude since the trouncing of the Thomists in the first letters) and explicitly opposed to that of Calvin. He sees and says that Catholics must

close their ranks against the enemy outside instead of inventing imaginary heresies within the Church.

The last letter brings up the crucial distinction, which was to play so great a part in the *Pensées*, between the three orders of knowledge, through the senses, reason and faith. The immediate context is the question of law and fact, and Pascal insists that only the evidence of our eyes, not a papal bull, can satisfactorily establish whether or not certain words are in Jansenius. In retrospect this theory of orders can be seen to explain much of Pascal's argument against the Jesuits: the confessional is no place for legalistic ingenuity, but for a broken and contrite heart; mechanical devotions, the wearing of pious talismans and other purely external practices can have no relevance to salvation without the appropriate interior dispositions. The *Letters* are a protest against a form of religion which Pascal regarded as irrelevant and, in every sense of the word, impertinent. God will not be mocked, and Pascal refused to believe that those who had forsaken all to follow him could be wrong. By their works ye shall know them, indeed, but by God's free gift of grace alone shall they be saved. His deepest religious and moral convictions were engaged in this battle, to which, as he explicitly affirms, he believed himself called by God.

5

The *Provincial Letters* ended abruptly just fourteen months after they had begun (24 March 1657). They were repeatedly condemned, and very widely read, but it had become too dangerous to go on with them and Pascal continued the fight in other ways. Thanks to his authorship, or collaboration, a series of pamphlets appeared attacking the casuists in the name of the Paris clergy, and had some effect. By the end of the century the worst excesses of casuistry had been condemned and removed, and to that extent the *Letters* may be said to have succeeded, but this was by then small consolation to Port-Royal. By the end

of 1661 no further delaying tactics were possible, and the nuns had to sign a formulary condemning Jansenius and his doctrine by name. Jacqueline Pascal is said to have died of a broken heart a week or two before the signature, to be followed in August 1662 by her brother. The subsequent course of Jansenism was stormy; momentary lulls could not prevent catastrophe. The nuns were dispersed, allowed to return, then finally dispersed again, Arnauld was reinstated during the brief 'Peace of the Church', but disgraced again and died in exile. Finally, on Louis XIV's orders, the abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs was destroyed by troops (1710), and Jansenism flourished only in the Low Countries, where its lineal descendants are the schismatic Old Catholics. Ironically the Jesuits too ran into disaster, and after being expelled from most countries, including France, they were dissolved by the Pope in 1773, surviving only because it suited the heretical sovereigns of Prussia and Russia to offer them asylum. This belated sequel has little or nothing to do with the *Provincial Letters*.

The *Letters* have often enough been studied under the traditional academic categories of influence and imitations, but it is more profitable here to consider the lesson they teach. Long before the age of mass media Pascal showed how a dedicated minority with an able spokesman, working in clandestine conditions of the greatest danger, can effectively defy a large and powerful organization, backed by all the resources of civil authority. He showed that it is possible to counter unscrupulous propaganda, to turn against the enemy the techniques of the 'smear' and 'big lie' so sickeningly familiar to us today, and win a hearing in the face of persecution by tenacity and integrity. This is not to say that the Jesuits were all black or the Jansenists all white; there were plenty of saintly Jesuits, not only among their missionary martyrs, and plenty of spiteful and intriguing Jansenists (though not among the nuns of Port-Royal). The point is that the *Letters* attack spiritual wickedness in high places and defend evangelical purity; the concrete and topical

identification of the forces of good and evil with specific persons and parties may be open to question but the moral standpoint is not. It is human nature to side with David against Goliath, even if it is also human nature to give the devil his due. If Pascal had been less fair he would have been less successful, for he would then have been betraying the very principles for which he was fighting. Recent events have taught us that the truth must be defended with as much courage and technical skill as can be mustered by its enemies, but in the long run we know too that propaganda based on skill alone can never prevail against the truth. The *Provincial Letters* are there to remind us.

*

There are numerous modern editions of the *Provincial Letters*, whether in Pascal's collected works or separate. Probably the most convenient edition is that in the Bibliothèque de Cluny by Jean Steinmann (2 vols., 1962), which contains a number of documents relating to the dispute, and the most recent and scholarly edition is in the new series of Classiques Garnier, by L. Cognet. Both these editions, and nearly all other modern ones, follow the text of the *Letters* as they originally came out and this is the text I have translated.

I have left untranslated those Latin passages of which a French translation or paraphrase had been provided by Pascal, but in all other cases have translated the Latin and italicized it to distinguish it from the French. All Biblical references are to the Authorized Version, except where Pascal's rendering is so free as to demand direct translation.

I am happy to acknowledge my debt to the anonymous English translator of 1657,* whose version of the ode in the *Eleventh Letter* is so much better than anything I could hope to achieve that I have reproduced it without alteration. It also gives me particular pleasure to express my gratitude to Dr Anthony Levi, S.J., for invaluable advice on a number of points.

June 1967 A.J.K.

* *Les Provinciales or The Mysterie of Jesuitisme*, London, 1657.

NOTE ON GRACE

THE discussion on grace in the *Provincial Letters* turns as much on misunderstanding as on disagreement, for each side denied holding the views attributed to it by the other. The important thing is to know what Pascal and his opponents *thought* they were attacking. Everyone but the Jansenists themselves thought that Jansenism consisted essentially in the following Five Propositions:

'1. Some commandments of God are impossible to the righteous though they desire and strive to fulfil them, according to the power they possess at the moment; and they lack the grace which would render these commandments possible.

'2. In the state of fallen nature, resistance to interior grace is impossible.

'3. In order to deserve merit or demerit, in the state of fallen nature, man is not required to enjoy the freedom which excludes necessity; it is enough for him to enjoy freedom from constraint.

'4. The semi-Pelagians admitted the need for interior and prevenient grace for every action, even in the act of initial faith: but they were heretics because they claimed this grace to be such that the human will was able to resist or obey it.

'5. It is a renewal of the semi-Pelagian heresy to say that Christ died for all men without exception.'

Pascal for his part gave his version of the various conflicting views in a number of writings on grace. The following is a translation of part of the first (*Premier écrit sur la grâce*):

'Detesting this abominable opinion [of the Calvinists] . . . the Molinists not only opposed it, which would have been enough, but took the completely contrary point of view. According to this, God has a conditional desire to save all men in general. To this effect Jesus Christ became incarnate in order to redeem

them all without exception, and as his grace is given to all, it depends on their will and not God's whether they make good use of it or not. Foreseeing from all eternity the good or bad use man would make of this grace solely through his own free will, unaided by any discerning grace, God's will is to save those who use it well and damn those who do not, with no absolute desire on his part either to save or to damn any particular man.

'This opinion, contrary to that of the Calvinists, produces just the contrary effect. . . . It excludes any absolute desire in God, and makes salvation and damnation proceed from the will of man, whereas in Calvin's view both proceed from the will of God.'

He continues with a long definition of the view of 'the disciples of St Augustine' (that is, the Jansenists), which contains the following:

'There are three sorts of men: those who never attain faith; those who attain it but do not persevere and die in mortal sin; and finally those who attain faith and persevere in charity until their death. Jesus Christ had no absolute desire that the first should receive any grace by his death, since they have in fact received none.

'He desired to redeem the second; he gave them the grace which would have brought them to salvation, if rightly used, but he did not wish to give them that singular grace of perseverance, without which it is never rightly used.

'But in the case of the last Jesus Christ has desired their salvation absolutely, and brings them to it by certain and infallible means.

'All men are obliged to believe, but with a belief mingled with fear and not accompanied by any certainty, that they belong to this small number of elect whom Jesus Christ wishes to save, and never to judge of any of the men living on earth, however wicked and impious they may be, as long as a single moment of life remains, that they are not numbered among the predestined, leaving discernment of the elect and the damned as an impene-

trable secret of God. Which obliges them to do for such men whatever may contribute to their salvation.

'That is their opinion, according to which we can see that God has an absolute desire to save those who are saved and a conditional desire, based on his foreknowledge, to damn the damned; and that salvation comes from God's will, and damnation from the will of man.'

It would be pointless to go into further definitions, but it should already be apparent that there was little room for agreement when each party, rightly or wrongly, believed the other to hold views so incompatible with their own. It should be observed that Pascal was not the first to tax the Molinists with holding a modified form of the Pelagian heresy (semi-Pelagianism) condemned by the early Church thanks to St Augustine, nor were the Jesuits alone in detecting disquieting affinities between Calvin and Jansenius. All, however, agreed that St Augustine's authentic view was unimpeachably orthodox, although open to more than one interpretation.

LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL GENTLEMAN BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PRESENT DEBATES IN THE SORBONNE

Paris, 23 January 1656

SIR,

How wrong we were! I only had my eyes opened yesterday. Until then I thought that the arguments in the Sorbonne were about something of real importance and fraught with the gravest consequences for religion. So many meetings of a body as famous as the Faculty of Paris, at which so much has occurred that is extraordinary and unprecedented, raise expectations so high that it seems incredible that the subject should be anything but extraordinary.

Yet you will be very surprised when you hear from the present account the upshot of so great a commotion; which is what I am briefly going to tell you now that I am fully informed on the subject.

There are two questions under examination; the first of fact, the other of law.

The question of fact is whether M. Arnauld is guilty of temerity* for asserting in his *Second Letter*: 'that he has carefully read Jansenius's book, that he has not found in it the propositions condemned by the late Pope, but despite this, since he condemns these propositions wherever they may be found, he also condemns them in Jansenius if they are there.'

The question is whether he can, without temerity, thus express doubts as to whether these propositions come from Jansenius when the bishops have declared that they do.

The matter comes up before the Sorbonne. Seventy-one doctors come to his defence, maintaining that his only possible answer to those who asked him so often in their writings

* A technical term for an error short of heresy.

whether he held these propositions to be in the book was that he could not find them, but none the less condemned them if they were there.

Some, going even further, declared that however hard they looked they could never find them there, and had even found quite contrary ones, earnestly requesting any doctor who might have found them to point them out: something so simple that it could not well be refused, since it was one sure means of dealing with all of them, including M. Arnauld; but their request has been constantly refused. So much for what happened in that quarter.

On the other side stood eighty secular doctors and some forty from the Mendicant Orders, who condemned M. Arnauld's proposition but would not examine whether what he said was true or false, going so far as to declare that it was not a question of the truth, but solely of the temerity of the proposition.

There were in addition fifteen who did not vote for censure, and are described as indifferent.

That is how they settled the question of fact, which causes me little concern, for whether M. Arnauld is guilty of temerity or not my conscience is not affected. If out of curiosity I wanted to know whether these propositions are in Jansenius, his book is neither so rare nor so bulky as to prevent me from reading it in full and clearing up this point for myself without reference to the Sorbonne.

But, if I were not afraid of being guilty of temerity myself, I think that I should share the opinion of the majority of the people I see; so far they have believed on the strength of public assurances that these propositions are in Jansenius, but they are beginning to suspect the contrary because of this strange refusal to point them out, so strange, indeed, that I have never yet met anyone who claims to have found them there. So I am afraid that this censure may do more harm than good, and give those familiar with its history quite the opposite impression to what has been concluded, for people are really becoming suspicious

and only believe things they can see for themselves. But, as I said before, this point is unimportant, because it involves no question of faith.

As for the question of law, it seems to be of much greater moment in that it affects faith. Thus I have been particularly careful to find out about it. But you will be pleased to see that it is just as unimportant as the other.

The point at issue is to examine what M. Arnauld said in this same *Letter*: 'that the grace without which we can do nothing had failed in St Peter when he fell.' You and I both thought that this meant examining the basic principles of grace, for instance whether it is not given to all men or whether it is efficacious, but we were quite mistaken. I have become a great theologian in a short time, as you will see.

In order to know the truth of the matter, I saw M.N., a doctor at the Collège de Navarre, who lives near me, and is, as you know, one of the most zealous opponents of the Jansenists. As my curiosity made me almost as eager as he, I asked him if they would not formally decide that 'grace is given to all men' so that there should be no more doubts expressed on that score. But he rebuffed me rudely, saying that that was not the point; that there were some of his party who held that grace is not given to all; that the examiners themselves had said before the whole Sorbonne that this opinion was *problematic*, which view he shared himself; and he confirmed it for me from a passage of St Augustine which he described as famous: 'We know that grace is not given to all men.'

I apologized for misunderstanding his views and asked him to tell me if they would not then at least condemn the Jansenists' other opinion, which has caused so much fuss: 'that grace is efficacious and determines our will to do good.' But I fared no better in my second question.

'You do not understand anything about it,' he said: 'that is no heresy, but an orthodox opinion. All the Thomists hold it, and I maintained it myself in my doctoral thesis.'

I did not dare put any more of my doubts to him; and indeed I no longer knew what the difficulty was when, for my own enlightenment, I begged him to tell me what made M. Arnauld's proposition heretical.

'The fact,' he said, 'that he does not recognize that the righteous have the power to fulfil God's commandments in the way in which we understand it.'

I left him after this instructive talk, and, very proud of knowing the nub of the matter, went off to find M.N., who is getting better and better, and was in good enough health to take me along to his brother-in-law, a Jansenist if ever there was one, but a very good man for all that. In the hope of a warmer welcome I pretended to be one of their fervent supporters, and said:

'Could the Sorbonne possibly be introducing into the Church the error: "that all the righteous always have the power to fulfil the commandments"?'

'What are you saying?' my doctor said. 'Are you describing as an error so Catholic a view, which only Lutherans and Calvinists oppose?'

'What,' said I, 'is that not your opinion?'

'No,' he said, 'we anathematize it as heretical and impious.'

Surprised at this answer, I realized that I had overdone the Jansenist role, as I had overdone the Molinist one previously. But, feeling quite uncertain how he would answer, I asked him to tell me in confidence whether he held that: 'the righteous always have real power to observe these precepts.' My man became very excited at this, though with a holy zeal, and said that nothing would ever make him disguise his feelings; that this is what he believed, and that he and his friends would defend it to the death, as being the pure doctrine of St Thomas and of St Augustine, their master.

He addressed me so earnestly that I could not doubt him. With this assurance I returned to my first doctor, and told him, with some satisfaction, that I was sure the Sorbonne would soon be at peace; that the Jansenists agreed on the power of the

righteous to fulfil the commandments; that I would vouch for it, that I would get them to sign it in their own blood.

'All very fine!' he said; 'you must be a theologian to appreciate the finer points. The difference between us is so subtle that we can barely point it out ourselves; you would have too much difficulty in understanding it. Just be satisfied with the knowledge that the Jansenists will indeed tell you that the righteous always have power to fulfil the commandments: that is not what we are arguing about. But they will not tell you that this power is *proximate*: that is the point.'

This was a new word to me, and unfamiliar. Up till then I had understood the business, but this term plunged me into obscurity, and I think is was only invented to confuse people. So I asked him to explain it, but he was very mysterious about it, and sent me off, with no further satisfaction, to ask the Jansenists if they admitted this *proximate* power. I fixed the term in my memory, for my intellect did not come into it, and for fear of forgetting it, I went straight back to my Jansenist, to whom I said forthwith, after the opening courtesies:

'Please tell me whether you admit *proximate* power.'

He began to laugh and said coldly:

'You tell me yourself in what sense you mean it, and then I will tell you what I think about it.'

As my knowledge did not extend that far I found myself faced with the impossibility of answering him, but all the same, to save my visit from being fruitless, I said to him at random:

'I mean in the sense of the Molinists.'

Whereupon my man, quite unmoved, asked:

'To which of the Molinists are you referring?'

I offered him the whole lot together, as forming a single body acting in the same spirit, but he said:

'You do not know much about it. Far from all having the same views they are in fact quite divided amongst themselves. But as they are all at one in their intention of destroying M. Arnauld, they have decided to agree on this word *proximate*;

they will utter it in unison, though each man means something different. Thus they can all speak the same language and use such apparent consistency to form a considerable body and constitute a majority, the surer to crush him.'

This reply amazed me, but without accepting such an impression of the Molinists' evil designs, which I am not ready simply to take at his word and which is none of my concern, I concentrated merely on discovering the different meanings given to this mysterious word *proximate*. But he told me:

'I should be glad to enlighten you, but you would find such inconsistency and gross contradiction that you would hardly believe me. You would be suspicious of me. You will feel surer if you hear it from their own lips, and I will give you the addresses. You need only to see M. Le Moine and Father Nicolaï separately.'

'I do not know either of them,' I told him.

'Well,' he said, 'see if you know any of those whom I am going to name. For they follow M. Le Moine's opinions.'

I did in fact know some of them. Then he said:

'See whether you know any Dominicans, who are known as neo-Thomists, for they are all like Father Nicolaï.'

I knew some of those he named also, and determined to profit by this advice and settle the business, I left him and went first to one of M. Le Moine's disciples.

I begged him to tell me what it meant 'to have proximate power to do something'.

'That is easy,' he said, 'it means having everything necessary for doing it, so that nothing more is needed in order to act.'

'And so,' I said, 'having *proximate power* to cross a river means having a boat, boatman, oars, and so on, so that nothing more is needed.'

'Quite right,' he said.

'And having *proximate power to see*,' I said, 'means having good sight, and being in good light. For anyone with good sight in the dark would not have proximate power to see,

according to you, since he would need light, without which no one can see.'

'Spoken like a scholar,' he said.

'And consequently,' I went on, 'when you say that all the righteous always have proximate power to keep the commandments, you mean that they always have the grace necessary for fulfilling them, so that they lack nothing as far as God is concerned.'

'Wait a minute,' he said, 'they always have what is necessary for keeping them, or at least for praying to God.'

'I quite understand,' I said; 'they have all that is necessary for praying God to help them, without it being necessary for them to have any fresh grace from God to pray.'

'You have understood correctly,' he said.

'But then do they not need an efficacious grace in order to pray to God?'

'No,' he said, 'according to M. Le Moine.'

To save time I went to the Dominicans and asked for those whom I knew to be neo-Thomists. I asked them to tell me what is meant by *proximate power*.

'Is it not the power,' I said, 'which contains everything needful for action?'

'No,' they told me.

'What? But, Father, if this power is short of something do you call it *proximate*, and would you say, for instance, that a man in the dark, with no light, has the *proximate power to see*?'

'Indeed he has, according to us, if he is not blind.'

'I do not mind,' I said, 'but M. Le Moine understands just the opposite.'

'That is true,' they said, 'but that is how we understand it.'

'Agreed,' I said, 'for I never argue about a name so long as I am told in what sense it is being taken. But I see from this that when you say that the righteous always have the *proximate power* to pray to God you mean that they need extra assistance to pray, otherwise they never will pray.'

'That is fine,' answered my Reverend Fathers hugging me, 'fine; for they must have in addition an efficacious grace, not given to all, which determines their will to pray. And it is heretical to deny that this efficacious grace is needed for prayer.'

'Fine,' I said in my turn, 'but according to you the Jansenists are Catholics and M. Le Moine a heretic, for the Jansenists say that the righteous have the power to pray, but that they still need an efficacious grace, and that is what you approve. While M. Le Moine says that the righteous can pray without efficacious grace, and that is what you condemn.'

'Yes,' they said, 'but M. Le Moine calls this power *proximate power*.'

'What! But Reverend Fathers,' I said, 'it is playing with words to say that you are in agreement because you both use the same terms, when you mean different things.'

The Fathers did not answer. At that moment the disciple of M. Le Moine turned up so opportunely that I found it extraordinary, but since then I have learned that they meet quite often and are constantly involved together.

So I said to M. Le Moine's disciple:

'I know someone who says that all the righteous always have the power to pray God, but that they would none the less never actually pray without being determined to do so by an efficacious grace, which God does not always grant to all the righteous. Is he a heretic?'

'Wait a moment,' said my doctor; 'you might catch me out. Let us then take it in easy stages: *distinguo*; if he calls this power *proximate*, he is a Thomist, and so Catholic, if not, he is a Jansenist, and so a heretic.'

'He does not call it,' I said, 'either proximate or not proximate.'

'Then he is a heretic,' he said: 'ask these good Fathers.'

I did not ask for their verdict, because they were already nodding agreement, but I said to them:

'He refuses to admit this word *proximate* because no one will explain it to him.'

At that one of the Fathers was about to offer his definition, but he was interrupted by M. Le Moine's disciple who said to him:

'Do you want to start off our squabbles again? Did we not agree not to explain this word *proximate*, and both to utter it without saying what it signifies?'

The Dominican admitted this.

That showed me what they had in mind, and as I got up to go I said:

'To tell the truth, Reverend Father, I am very much afraid that all this is pure quibbling, and whatever comes of your meetings, I venture to predict that, even if the censure is passed, peace will not be established. For even if it is decided that we must pronounce the syllables *prox-i-mate*, is it not obvious to anyone that if they remain unexplained each of you will claim the victory? The Dominicans will say that the word is understood in their sense, M. Le Moine in his, and so there will be far more argument over explaining it than introducing it. For, after all, there would be no great danger in accepting it without any meaning, for it is only the meaning that can do any harm. But it would be something unworthy of the Sorbonne and theology to use equivocal and captious words without explaining them.'

'Now, for the last time I ask you, Reverend Fathers, to tell me what I must believe to be a Catholic.'

'You must,' they all said in unison, 'say that all the righteous have *proximate power*, leaving aside all question of meaning: "*leaving aside the Thomist meaning and the meaning of other theologians.*"'

'In other words,' I said as I took my leave, 'one must pronounce this word with one's lips to avoid being called a heretic. Is this word Scriptural?'

'No,' they told me.

'Does it come from the Fathers, the councils, or the popes?'

'No.'

'What about St Thomas?'

'No.'

'Then why is there any need to say it, since it has no authority behind it nor any meaning in itself?'

'You are stubborn,' they said. 'You must either say it or be heretical, and the same with M. Arnauld. For we are in the majority, and if necessary we shall bring in enough Franciscans to ensure victory.'

Leaving them with this solid argument, I have just come away to write you this report. From it you can see that none of the following points is in question or condemned by either side: *1. That grace is not given to all men. 2. That all the righteous have power to fulfil God's commandments. 3. That in order to fulfil them, and even to pray, they still need an efficacious grace which irresistibly determines their wills. 4. That this grace is not always given to all the righteous, and depends on the pure mercy of God.* Consequently the only risk left lies in this meaningless word *proximate*.

Happy the people who know nothing of it! Happy those who came before it was born! For the only cure I can see is for the gentlemen of the Academy to use their authority to banish this barbaric Sorbonical word which is causing so much dissension. Otherwise censure seems certain, but I can see that the only harm it will do is to bring the Sorbonne into contempt for such behaviour and deprive it of the authority it needs on other occasions.

However I leave you free to decide for or against the word *proximate*; for I love my neighbour* too much to use this excuse to persecute him. If you find this account to your liking, I will continue to keep you posted of any developments.

I am, etc.

*The word '*prochain*' means both 'proximate' and 'neighbour'.

SECOND LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 29 January 1656

SIR,

I was just sealing up my letter to you when I had a visit from Monsieur N., our old friend, at the most opportune moment for satisfying my curiosity; for he is very well-informed about the questions of the moment, and fully conversant with the Jesuits' secrets, being constantly with them and the leading ones at that. After discussing the matter which brought him to see me, I asked him to tell me in a word the points at issue between the two parties.

He gave me immediate satisfaction, and told me that there were two main ones: 1. concerning *proximate power*, 2. concerning *sufficient grace*. I explained about the first in my last letter; I will tell you about the second in this one.

In a word, then, I learned that their difference concerning sufficient grace consists in the fact that the Jesuits claim that there is a grace given generally to all, so subject to free will that this makes it efficacious or not as it chooses without any fresh assistance from God, and without anything more being needed for it to act effectively; which is why it is called *sufficient*, because by itself it is sufficient for action. The Jansenists on the contrary will not admit the existence of any actually sufficient grace which is not also efficacious; in other words, all forms of grace which do not determine the will to effective action are insufficient for action, because they say that we never act without *efficacious grace*. That is where they differ.

He went on to tell me about the doctrine of the neo-Thomists.

'It is very odd,' he said, 'they agree with the Jesuits in admitting a *sufficient grace* given to all men, but yet they maintain that men never act through this grace alone, and that before they can act they need God to give them an *efficacious*

grace really determining their wills to action, and not given by God to all men.'

'Consequently, according to this doctrine,' I said, 'this grace is *sufficient* without sufficing.'

'That is right,' he said, 'for if it suffices, nothing more is needed for action and if it does not suffice, it is not *sufficient*.'

'But,' I said, 'what difference is there then between them and the Jansenists?'

'They differ,' he said, 'because it can at least be said in the Dominicans' favour that they continue to maintain that all men have *sufficient grace*.'

'I see,' said I, 'but they say this without thinking it, since they add that in order to act we must necessarily possess "*an efficacious grace, not given to all*"; and so, if they are like the Jesuits in using a meaningless term, they are unlike them, and like the Jansenists, in the substance of the matter.'

'That is true,' he said.

'How then,' I asked, 'have the Jesuits come to make common cause with them? And why do they not oppose them as well as the Jansenists, since they will always have in them powerful opponents, who, by maintaining that an efficacious and determinant grace is necessary, will prevent them from establishing the grace which, you say, is sufficient by itself?'

'They must not do that,' he said; 'those who are powerful in the Church must be more carefully handled. The Jesuits are satisfied with having got them to admit at least the name *sufficient grace*, although they mean whatever they like by it. This gives them the advantage of being able at will to make their opinion look ridiculous and untenable. For supposing that all men have sufficient grace, there is nothing easier than to conclude that efficacious grace is not necessary, since if it were necessary this would preclude the alleged sufficiency. And it would be no good saying that that meant something else, for the popular interpretation of this term does not allow of such an explanation. Anyone who says *sufficient* is saying "all that is

necessary"; that is the natural and proper meaning. Now if you were familiar with the past history of the affair you would know that the Jesuits have been so unsuccessful in getting their doctrine established that you would wonder at seeing it make such headway. If you knew how the Dominicans opposed it under Popes Clement VIII and Paul V, you would not be surprised to see that they are not picking any quarrel, and that they agree to the Dominicans holding their opinion provided that their own is free, and especially when the Dominicans promote it through these words which they have agreed to use publicly.

'The Jesuits are very pleased to find them so obliging. They do not insist on their denying the necessity of efficacious grace; that would be pressing them too hard. One should not bully one's friends; the Jesuits have won enough. For people are taken in by words; few go deeply into things; and so, now that both sides accept the term *sufficient grace*, though with different meanings, everyone except the most subtle theologians thinks that the word signifies something maintained by both Dominicans and Jesuits. And events will show that it is not the Jesuits who have been the most gullible.'

I admitted that they were clever people, and profiting from his advice I went straight off to the Dominicans. At the door I found one of my good friends, a great Jansenist (for I have friends in every party) who was asking for one of the Fathers, though not the one I was after. However, after some pressing I induced him to join me, and asked for one of my neo-Thomists.

He was delighted to see me again.

'Well, Father,' I said, 'it is not enough for all men to have *proximate power*, which never in fact enables them to act; they must have *sufficient grace* as well, which does not enable them to act either. This is the opinion of your school, is it not?'

'Yes,' said the good Father, 'and that is just what I said in the Sorbonne this morning. I spoke for my full half-hour, and but for the sand running out I would have changed the wretched

proverb which is already current in Paris: *He nods his opinion like a monk in the Sorbonne.*'

'And what do you mean by your half-hour and the sand?' I replied. 'Are your opinions trimmed to a fixed measure?'

'Yes,' he said, 'for the past few days.'

'And are you obliged to speak for half an hour?'

'No. You can speak as little as you like.'

'But not as much as you like,' I said. 'What an excellent rule for ignorant people! What a good excuse for those who have nothing worthwhile to say! But tell me, Father, is this grace given to all men *sufficient*?'

'Yes,' he said.

'And yet it is of no effect without efficacious grace?'

'That is true,' he said.

'That means,' I said, 'that all have enough grace, and all do not have enough; that this grace suffices, although it does not suffice; that it is sufficient in name and insufficient in fact. Quite honestly, Father, this is a very subtle doctrine. Has leaving the world made you forget what the word *sufficient* means? Do you not recall that it comprises everything necessary for action? But you cannot have forgotten all about it. To use an analogy which you will more readily appreciate, if for dinner you were given just two ounces of bread and a glass of water, would you be pleased with your prior if he told you that this was sufficient food for you, on the grounds that by adding something else (which he was not going to give you) you would have everything necessary for a good dinner? How then can you allow yourself to say that all men have *sufficient grace* to act, when you admit that a further grace is absolutely necessary for action, and is not possessed by all men? Is it a matter of indifference to say that with *sufficient grace* we can effectively act?'

'What,' said the good man, 'indifferent! That is a *heresy*, a formal *heresy*. The fact that *efficacious grace* is necessary for effective action is an article of *faith*; it is a *heresy* to deny it.'

'How do we stand then?' I cried. 'What side am I to take? If

I deny sufficient grace, I am a Jansenist. If I admit it like the Jesuits, saying that efficacious grace is not necessary, I will be heretical, according to you. And if I admit it like you, saying that efficacious grace is necessary, I am sinning against common sense and am *demented*, according to the Jesuits. What am I to do in this situation, when I cannot avoid being either demented or heretical or Jansenist? And to what terms are we reduced when the Jansenists are the only ones at odds neither with faith nor reason, and exempt at once from folly and error?'

My Jansenist friend took my speech as auguring well for him, and believed me already won over. He said nothing to me, however, but addressed the Father:

'Would you kindly tell me, Father, in what respect you agree with the Jesuits?'

'Inasmuch,' he said, 'as the Jesuits and ourselves recognize *sufficient grace* given to all.'

'But,' he replied, 'there are two elements in this expression *sufficient grace*: there is the sound, which is only so much wind, and the thing it signifies, which is real and effective. Since you agree, then, with the Jesuits concerning the word *sufficient* but differ from them on the sense, it is obvious that you differ on the substance of this term and only agree on the sound. Is this sincere and cordial behaviour?'

'For goodness' sake!' said the good man, 'what are you complaining about, since we are not betraying anyone by talking like this? For in our schools we openly say that we mean just the opposite to the Jesuits.'

'My complaint,' said my friend, 'is that you do not publish abroad the fact that by *sufficient grace* you mean a grace that is not sufficient. You are in conscience obliged, if you are going to change the meaning of the ordinary terms of religion in this way, to say that when you admit a *sufficient grace* in all men you mean that they do not in fact possess sufficient grace. Everyone in the world understands the same thing by the word "sufficient"; the neo-Thomists alone mean something different.

Every woman, and they are half mankind, every courtier, every soldier, magistrate, lawyer, merchant, tradesman, all ordinary people; in short, all sorts and conditions of men, except the Dominicans, understand by the word "sufficient" that which comprises everything needful. No one is aware of this peculiarity. People everywhere just say that the Dominicans hold that all men possess *sufficient grace*. What else is one to conclude but that they hold all men to have all the grace necessary for action, especially when one sees them linked in interests and intrigues with the Jesuits who understand it in this way? Does not the uniformity of your utterances, taken with this party alliance, plainly express and confirm the uniformity of your opinions?

'The faithful all ask theologians to tell them the true state of nature since its corruption. St Augustine and his disciples answer that it no longer possesses sufficient grace except inasmuch as it may please God to bestow it. Then the Jesuits come along, saying that all men have grace which is effectively sufficient. The Dominicans are consulted about this contradiction. What do they do about it? They join with the Jesuits. This alliance puts them in the majority. They dissociate themselves from those who deny such sufficient grace. They declare that all men possess it. What else is one to infer from that but that they support the Jesuits? And then they add that this sufficient grace is useless without efficacious grace, which is not granted to all.

'Shall I show you a picture of the Church faced with these different opinions? I regard her as being like a man who leaves home to go on a journey and is set upon by robbers who hurt him badly and leave him half-dead. He sends for three doctors from towns nearby. The first examines his injuries, judges them fatal and tells him that God alone can give him back his lost strength. The second then arrives, and, wanting to please him, says that he still has sufficient strength left to reach home, insulting the first one, who holds the opposite view, and resolving to ruin him. In this state of doubt the patient sees the

third one coming from afar, and stretches out his hands to him as the one who is going to decide. The third one, looking at the injuries and learning the opinion of the other two, embraces the second and joins him; both band together against the first and drive him away in disgrace because they are in the majority. The patient judges from these proceedings that the third shares the view of the second, and asking him in fact for his opinion, is told positively that he has sufficient strength to undertake the journey. The injured man, however, realizing his weakness, asks him how he came to judge him strong enough.

'"Because," he says, "you still have your legs; now the legs are limbs naturally sufficient for walking."

'"But," asks the patient, "have I the strength required to use them, because it seems to me that they are not much use in my exhausted condition?"

'"Definitely not," says the doctor, "and in practice you will never walk unless God grants you some extra help to sustain and guide you."

'"What!" says the patient, "so I do not have sufficient and adequate strength to enable me effectively to walk?"

'"Far from it," he answers.

'"Then," says the injured man, "you hold the opposite view to that of your companion regarding my true state?"

'"I admit that," he replies.

'What do you think the patient said? He complained of the odd behaviour and ambiguous language of this third doctor. He condemned him for joining the second one, from whose opinion he dissented and with whom he was only in apparent agreement, and for driving away the first, with whom he was in real agreement. Then, trying his strength and recognizing from experience how weak he really was, he sent them both away, called back the first doctor and put himself in his hands. Then, following his advice, he asked God for the strength which he confessed he lacked; God had mercy on him, and by his help he reached home safely.'

The good Father, astonished at such a parable, did not reply. To reassure him I quietly said:

'But after all, Father, what can you have been thinking of to give the name "sufficient" to a grace which, you say, faith obliges us to believe insufficient in fact?'

'It is all very well for you to talk about it,' he said. 'You are a free and private person; I am a religious and member of a community. Can you not tell the difference? We depend on our superiors; they depend on someone else. They have promised our votes. What do you think would become of me?'

We understood the allusion; and that reminded us of his confrère, banished to Abbeville for something similar.

'But,' I said, 'why has your community pledged itself to admit this grace?'

'That is another story,' he said. 'All I can tell you about it is, briefly, that our order has as far as possible supported St Thomas's teaching on efficacious grace. How zealously it opposed the birth of Molinism! How hard it worked to establish the necessity for the efficacious grace of Christ! Do you not know what happened under Clement VIII and Paul V? The first was prevented by death and the other by Italian affairs from publishing his bull, so that our weapons remain in the Vatican. But the Jesuits, from the time that the heresy of Luther and Calvin began, exploited the scanty ability of ordinary people to distinguish these errors from the truth of St Thomas's teaching and in no time had made such progress in spreading their teaching everywhere that they were soon found to be in control of popular belief, while we were liable to be denounced as Calvinists and treated as the Jansenists are today, unless we qualified the truth of efficacious grace by admitting, at least ostensibly, *sufficient grace*. In so critical a situation what better course could we take to save truth and our own reputation than to admit the name of *sufficient grace* while denying that it is sufficient in fact? That is how it all came about.'

He told us all this so regretfully that I felt sorry for him. But not so my companion, who said:

'Do not flatter yourself that you have saved the truth; if it did not have other protectors, it would have perished in such feeble hands. You have accepted into the Church her enemy's name; that amounts to accepting the enemy itself. Names and things are inseparable. Once this expression "sufficient grace" is established, it will be no good your saying that by it you understand a grace which is insufficient: no one will listen to you. The world would find your explanation odious; people talk with more sincerity about matters of far less importance. The Jesuits will triumph; it will be their grace, which is really sufficient, and not yours, only sufficient in name, which will be taken as established; and the opposite of what you believe will be made an article of faith.'

'We would all sooner suffer martyrdom,' said the Father, 'than consent to the establishment of *sufficient grace in the Jesuits' sense*, for St Thomas, whom we vow to follow to the death, is directly opposed to it.'

Whereupon my friend, more serious than I, said:

'Come, Father, your order has received an honour of which it makes poor use. It is abandoning the grace entrusted to it and which has never been abandoned since the Creation. This victorious grace, awaited by the patriarchs, foretold by the prophets, brought by Christ, preached by St Peter, explained by St Augustine, greatest of the Fathers, maintained by those who followed him, confirmed by St Bernard, last of the Fathers, upheld by St Thomas, the Angel of the Schools, handed on by him to your order, supported by so many of your Fathers, and so gloriously defended by your brethren under Popes Clement and Paul: this efficacious grace, entrusted to you for safe keeping, so that it should have preachers within a holy and imperishable order to publish it abroad until the end of time, this grace is as it were cast aside for such unworthy motives. It is time that other hands took up arms in its defence;

it is time for God to stir up fearless disciples who will follow the doctor of grace, and, ignoring the ties of the world, serve God for his own sake. It may well be that grace no longer has the Dominicans to defend it, but it will never lack for defenders, for it creates them itself through its almighty power. It demands pure and undefiled hearts, purifies them itself and detaches them from worldly interests which are incompatible with the Gospel truths. Forestall these threats, Father, and take care that God does not transfer this torch somewhere else, and leave you in the dark, without a crown.'

He would have said a lot more, for he was getting more and more worked up, but I interrupted him, and said as I got up:

'To tell the truth, Father, if I enjoyed any credit in France I would have it proclaimed to the sound of the trumpet: "BE IT KNOWN that when the Dominicans say that sufficient grace is given to all, they mean that all do not have grace which is effectively sufficient." Then you could say it as much as you liked, but not otherwise.'

So our visit ended.

This will show you that we have here a political *sufficiency* similar to *proximate power*. But I can tell you that there seems to be no danger in doubting this *proximate power* and *sufficient grace*, so long as you are not a Dominican.

I have just learned as I was sealing this letter that the censure has been passed, but as I do not yet know its terms, and as it will not be published until 15 February, I will not tell you about it until the next regular post.

I am, etc.

THE PROVINCIAL'S ANSWER TO HIS FRIEND'S FIRST TWO LETTERS

2 February 1656

SIR,

I am not the only one to have read your two letters. Everyone sees them, everyone hears them, everyone believes them. They are not appreciated only by theologians; society people enjoy them too, and even women find them intelligible.

This is how one of the gentlemen of the Academy writes to me about them; he is one of the most illustrious of an illustrious body of men, and at that time he had only seen your first letter: 'I wish that the Sorbonne, which owes so much to the memory of the late Cardinal,* would recognize the jurisdiction of his French Academy. The author of the *Letter* would be pleased; for, in my capacity of Academician, I should authoritatively condemn, banish, proscribe, I might almost say that I should exterminate with all my might this proximate power, which is causing so much fuss over nothing, and that without knowing what else he wants. The trouble is that our academic power is a very remote and limited one. I regret this, and I also much regret that the little I can do could not discharge my debt to you, etc.'

And this is how a person, to whose identity I shall give you no clue, writes to a lady who had put the first of your letters into his hands:

'I am more obliged to you than you can conceive for the letter you sent me; it is most original and very well written. It narrates without being a narrative; it clears up the most complex questions imaginable; it is delicately ironic; it is instructive even for those who know little about such matters; it doubles the pleasure of those who do understand them. It offers moreover an excellent defence and, if you like, delicate and

* Richelieu.

inoffensive criticism. In short there is such art, wit and judgement in this letter that I should very much like to know who composed it, etc.'

You too would very much like to know the identity of the person who writes like that about it, but be content to honour him unknown and when you do know him you will honour him all the more.

Go on with your letters, then, you can take my word for it, and let the censure come when it pleases: we are very ready to receive it. These words 'proximate power' and 'sufficient grace' with which we are threatened will not frighten us any more. We have learned too much from the Jesuits, the Dominicans and M. Le Moine about how many ways there are of turning them and what these two words are worth to worry about it.

Meanwhile I remain, etc.

THIRD LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY WAY OF ANSWER TO THE FOREGOING

Paris, 9 February 1656

SIR,

I have just received your letter, and at the same time a manuscript copy of the censure has been brought to me. I find that I am as well treated in the former as M. Arnauld is ill treated in the latter. I am afraid that there is some exaggeration in each case, and that our judges do not know us well enough. I feel sure that if they knew us better M. Arnauld would earn the approval of the Sorbonne and I the censure of the Academy. Our interests are thus quite contrary. In order to defend his innocence he should make himself known, whereas I must remain in obscurity if I am not to lose my reputation. Consequently, since I cannot reveal myself, I leave you to discharge my obligations to my distinguished supporters and will myself assume the task of keeping you posted about the censure.

I confess, Sir, that it has caused me the greatest surprise. I expected to find it condemning the most appalling heresies imaginable; but you will be full of wonder, as I am, that so many resounding preliminaries should come to nothing just as they are about to produce so great a result.

In order to enjoy what follows, please cast your mind back to the strange impression so long current concerning the Jansenists. Recall the conspiracies, factions, errors, schisms, outrages which have been for so long laid to their charge; how they have been denounced and denigrated in sermons and books; how this torrent after raging violently for so long had swollen in recent years, when they were publicly and openly accused of being not only heretical and schismatic, but apostate and infidel too, of denying the mystery of transubstantiation, and renouncing Christ and the Gospel.

Following such numerous and atrocious accusations it was

decided to examine their books and pass judgement on them. They chose M. Arnauld's *Second Letter*, allegedly full of the most detestable errors. His most professed enemies are appointed examiners. They search with concentrated attention for something in it to criticize, and they pick out one proposition concerning doctrine which they subject to censure.

What else should such conduct lead us to expect but that this proposition, selected in such remarkable circumstances, contained the essence of the blackest heresies imaginable? Yet in fact all that this proposition can be seen to contain is so clearly and formally expressed in the passages from the Fathers there cited by M. Arnauld that I have never met anyone who could tell the difference. People imagined, however, that there was some terrible difference, for since the passages from the Fathers are certainly Catholic, M. Arnauld's proposition must contain some appalling discrepancy to be heretical.

It was from the Sorbonne that such clarification was awaited. The whole of Christendom waited wide-eyed to perceive in the censure of these learned doctors this point which lay hidden from the gaze of ordinary men.

Meanwhile M. Arnauld composed his *Apologies*, where he sets out in several columns his proposition and the passages from the Fathers from which he had taken it, in order to demonstrate the consistency to even the least clearsighted.

He points out that St Augustine says in one passage which he quotes: 'that Christ shows us a righteous man, in the person of St Peter, who teaches us by his fall to avoid presumption.' He quotes another passage from the same Father, saying: 'that God left St Peter without grace in order to show that without grace we can do nothing.' He gives another, of St Chrysostom, who says: 'that St Peter's fall was not caused by any indifference towards Christ, but because grace failed him; and that it was not so much the result of his negligence as of God's abandonment, so that the whole Church should learn that without

God we can do nothing.' Following this he quotes the incriminated proposition, as follows: 'The Fathers show us a righteous man in the person of St Peter in whom that grace failed without which we can do nothing.'

Thereupon people try vainly to discover how it is possible for M. Arnauld's expression to be as different from that of the Fathers as truth from error, or faith from heresy. For where might such a difference be found? Perhaps in the fact that he says: 'that the Fathers show us a righteous man in the person of St Peter'? But those are St Augustine's very words. Or because he says that 'grace failed in him'? But the same St Augustine who said that 'St Peter was righteous' says 'that he did not have grace on that occasion.' Is it because he says: 'without grace we can do nothing'? But is this not what St Augustine says in the same place, and what St Chrysostom had said before him, differing from him only in expressing himself much more strongly, as when he says: 'that his fall was not caused by indifference or negligence, but by a failure of grace and God's abandonment'?

All these considerations had set everyone agog to know what the discrepancy was, when this censure, so long awaited and so publicized, finally appeared after so many meetings. But unfortunately it falls far short of our expectations. Either these good Molinists thought it beneath them to inform us, or for some other reason known only to themselves, all they did was to utter these words: 'this proposition is temerarious, impious, blasphemous, anathematized and heretical.'

Would you believe it, Sir, but most people, seeing their hopes dashed, have become quite annoyed and are taking issue with the censors themselves? The censors' behaviour has prompted some remarkable conclusions concerning M. Arnauld's innocence.

'Well,' they say, 'after all this time is this the best they can do, all these learned doctors intent on hounding one man? Can they find in all his works only three lines to condemn, and

taken at that from the very words of the greatest doctors of the Latin and Greek Churches? Have people ever been set on ruining an author whose writings did not provide a more specious pretext? And what better proof could be produced of this distinguished defendant's sound faith?

'What makes them utter,' they say, 'all the imprecations contained in the censure, where they pile up all the most dreadful words "poison, plague, horror, temerity, impiety, blasphemy, abomination, execration, anathema, heresy"? These are the most violent terms they could apply to Arius, or even Antichrist, and they use them to attack a heresy which no one can see and which they do not even reveal. If it is against the words of the Fathers that such behaviour is directed, where is faith and tradition? If against M. Arnauld's proposition, let us be shown how it differs from these words, since all we can see is perfect conformity between them. When we recognize what is evil in this proposition we shall find it detestable, but while we see no evil in it and find nothing but the opinions of saintly Fathers, conceived and expressed in their own words, how could we regard it with anything but holy veneration?'

That is how they carry on in their indignation; but these people are too perspicacious. We who do not go so deeply into things should keep calm about it all. Do we want to be wiser than the masters of the Sorbonne? Let us not take on more than they, we should only get lost in such an inquiry. The merest trifle would be enough to make this censure heretical. Truth is so delicate that one has only to depart the least bit from it to fall into error, but this error is so very fine that even without departing from it one finds oneself on the side of truth. There is only an imperceptible point between this proposition and the faith. The distance is so microscopic that when I failed to see it I was afraid of finding myself in disagreement with the doctors of the Church through being too much in agreement with the doctors of the Sorbonne. Promp-

ted by this fear, I felt it necessary to consult one of those who were neutral on the first question, so that I might learn from him the truth of the matter. So I saw one who is very able and asked him to be good enough to point out to me the details of this difference, because I freely admitted that I could find none.

He answered my request with a laugh, as if my innocence appealed to him:

'How simple you are to believe that there is any difference! But where might it be? Do you imagine that if they had found any they would not have shouted it aloud or that they would not have been delighted to display it before the eyes of everyone with whom they want to discredit M. Arnauld?'

These few words made me realize that all those who were neutral on the first question might not be so on the second. All the same I listened to his reasons, and said to him:

'Then why did they attack this proposition?'

To which he replied:

'Are you not aware of these two facts, familiar even to those who are least well informed about these affairs: first, that M. Arnauld has always avoided saying anything which was not solidly founded on the tradition of the Church; second, that his enemies are nevertheless determined to cut him off from it at all costs; and since his writings afforded no opening for their plans, they have been obliged to try and satisfy their passion by taking any proposition they could find and condemning it without saying how or why? For do you not know how the Jansenists keep them cornered, and press them so hard that if they let slip the slightest word against the principles of the Fathers they are at once overwhelmed by whole volumes, and forced to give in; and so having had their weakness so often put to the test, they thought it would be more easy and convenient to censure than to reply, because it is much easier for them to find monks than arguments?'

'What!' I said, 'if this is how it is, their censure is pointless;

for what credit will it enjoy when people see that it is unfounded and does not stand up to those who reply?'

'If you knew how people think,' said my doctor, 'you would talk quite differently. Their censure, however deserving of censure itself, will for a time be almost wholly effective; and though it is certain that people will come to realize that it is invalid by having this pointed out to them, it is also true that most people will at first be as much impressed by it as if it were fully justified. So long as it is proclaimed through the streets: "Here is the censure of M. Arnauld! Here is the condemnation of the Jansenists!" the Jesuits will have their way. How few people will read it? How few of those who read will understand it? How few will realize that it does not meet objections? Who do you think takes these things seriously, and bothers to examine them thoroughly? See how all this helps the enemies of the Jansenists. This makes them sure of victory, though, as usual, an empty victory, at least for a few months. That is a lot for them; then they will look for some new means of subsistence. They live from hand to mouth. That is how they have kept themselves going up to the present, at one moment by a catechism in which a child condemns their opponents, then by a procession in which Sufficient Grace leads Efficacious Grace in triumph, then by a play in which devils carry off Jansenius, another time by an almanack, now by this censure.'

'Indeed,' I said, 'a little while ago I had occasion to criticize the way the Molinists go about things; but after what you have told me, I must admire them for being so prudent and politic. I see that they could not have acted more safely or judiciously.'

'That is right,' he said, 'their safest course has always been to keep quiet. And that is what made a learned theologian say that the cleverest of them are those who intrigue a lot, talk little and write nothing.

'With this in mind, they prudently laid it down, when the meetings first began, that if M. Arnauld came to the Sorbonne it should be solely to make a plain statement of his views,

and not to take up the cudgels against anyone. When the examiners tried a slight departure from this method they did not come off too well. They found themselves too smartly rebutted by the second *Apologetic*.

'In the same frame of mind they hit upon the rare and novel idea of the half-hour and the sandglass. This saved them from being embarrassed by those tiresome doctors who enjoyed themselves by refuting all their arguments, producing books to convict them of falsehood, challenging them to reply and reducing them to a state where they had no answer.

'They did, of course, perfectly well realize that this curtailment of freedom, which led so many doctors to withdraw from the meetings, would do their censure no good; and that M. Arnauld's act would be a poor way of preparing for its favourable reception. They are sure enough that those who have not been fooled attach at least as much importance to the judgement of seventy doctors who stood to gain nothing by defending M. Arnauld as to that of a hundred others who had nothing to lose by condemning him.

'But after all they thought it would still be well worthwhile securing a censure, although it was passed by only part of the Sorbonne and not the whole body; although it was passed in conditions of little or no freedom, and obtained by a variety of little devices which are something less than regular; although it explains none of what might be in dispute; although it does not indicate what constitutes this heresy, and barely refers to it for fear of error. This very silence is a mystery for the simple; and it will have the peculiar advantage for the censure that most critical and subtle theologians will be unable to find anything wrong with its arguments.

'Set your mind at rest, then, and do not be afraid of being heretical if you use the condemned proposition. It is only wrong in M. Arnauld's *Second Letter*. Will you not take my word for it? Believe M. Le Moine, then, the most zealous of the examiners; only this morning a friend of mine, a doctor,

asked him to define the difference in question, and wanted to know if it was no longer permissible to say what the Fathers said, and was given this excellent answer:

'"This proposition," he said, "would be Catholic in the mouth of anyone else; it is only in M. Arnauld that the Sorbonne has condemned it." This should make you marvel at the devices of Molinism, which bring about such prodigious upheavals in the Church that what is Christian in the Fathers becomes heretical in M. Arnauld; what was heretical in the semi-Pelagians becomes orthodox in the Jesuits' writings; the time-honoured doctrine of St Augustine is an intolerable novelty, and the new inventions which are daily turned out before our eyes are supposed to be the Church's ancient faith.'

With this he left me.

This lesson opened my eyes. It made me realize that this is a new kind of heresy. It is not M. Arnauld's views which are heretical, it is just his person. It is a personal heresy. He is not heretical for having said or written anything, but merely because he is M. Arnauld. This is the only thing about him that they can find to criticize. Whatever he may do, until he ceases to exist, he will never be a good Catholic. St Augustine's doctrine of grace will never be the right one as long as he defends it. It would become so if he happened to attack it. Such a move could not fail and would be almost the only way to establish it and destroy Molinism; so disastrous is the effect he has on opinions which he embraces.

Let us then leave their differences at that. These are debates between theologians, not about theology. We who are not doctors are not concerned with their quarrels. Tell all our friends the news of the censure, and remain my friend as I, Sir, am,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

E.A.A.B.P.A.F.D.E.P.*

* These cryptic initials have been (and were meant to be) variously interpreted, but they are generally held to mean 'Et Ancien Ami. Blaise Pascal, Auvergnat, Fils D'Étienne Pascal.'

FOURTH LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 25 February 1656

SIR,

There is nothing quite like the Jesuits. I have seen plenty of Dominicans, doctors, and all sorts of people but without such a visit my education was incomplete. Others only copy them. Things are always better in the original. So I saw one of their most able men, and was accompanied by my faithful Jansenist, who had been with me at the Dominicans. As I was particularly anxious to be enlightened about their disagreement with the Jansenists concerning what they call *actual grace*, I said to the good Father that I should be most obliged if he would tell me about it; I did not even know what this term signified and would he please explain it.

'With pleasure,' he said, 'for I like people to show curiosity. Here is the definition. We call *actual grace* "an inspiration from God through which he lets us know his will and arouses in us the desire to accomplish it."'

'And what,' I said, 'is your quarrel with the Jansenists on this point?'

'We claim,' he replied, 'that God gives actual grace to all men, on the occasion of each temptation, because we maintain that, if on every occasion of temptation you did not have the actual grace to refrain from sin, whatever sin you committed could never be imputed to you. The Jansenists on the contrary say that sins committed without actual grace are still imputed to us. But they are all in the clouds.'

I half saw what he meant, but to get him to explain it more clearly I said:

'Father, this *actual grace* muddles me; I am not used to it. If you would be good enough to tell me the same thing without using this term I should be exceedingly obliged.'

'Yes,' said the Father, 'in other words you want me to substitute the definition for the thing defined; that never changes the sense of an argument, and I am quite happy to do so. Very well then, we maintain as a principle beyond doubt: "that an action cannot be imputed as sinful unless God gives us, before we commit it, knowledge of the evil contained therein and an inspiration which moves us to avoid it." Now do you follow me?'

Amazed at such an argument, which would mean that none of the sins which take us by surprise or are committed while God is wholly absent from our minds could be imputed to us, I turned to my Jansenist and saw from his expression that he did not believe a word of it. But as he made no comment, I said to the Father:

'I wish, Father, that what you say were true and based on sound evidence.'

'You want evidence?' he said at once: 'I will provide you with some, of the very best; just leave it to me.'

Whereupon he went away to fetch his books. Meanwhile I said to my friend:

'Do they have anyone else who talks like him?'

'Do you find it so novel?' he answered. 'You can be sure that neither the Fathers, nor popes, nor councils, nor Scripture, nor any work of piety, even of recent times, have ever spoken like that; but when it comes to casuists and neo-Scholastics he will bring you plenty.'

'What of it,' I said, 'I have no time for such authors if they are contrary to tradition.'

'You are quite right,' he said.

At these words the good Father came up laden with books. He handed me the first of the pile and said:

'Read Father Bauny's *Compendium of Sins*, which I have here; the fifth edition, what is more, to show you that it is a good book.'

'It is a pity,' said my Jansenist in an undertone, 'that that

book should have been condemned at Rome and by the bishops of France.'

'Look at page 906,' said the Father.

So I read it and found these words: 'For someone to sin and incur guilt before God, he must know that what he intends to do is no good, or at least have doubts or fears on that score, or consider that God disapproves of the action on which he is engaged, and forbids it, and must none the less do it, go ahead and press on.'

'That is a good start,' I said.

'But just look,' he said, 'what envy can do. This was what made M. Hallier, before he became one of our friends, deride Fr. Bauny and apply these words to him: "*Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*; Behold him who taketh away the sins of the world!"'

'It is true,' I said, 'that this is a quite new form of redemption according to Fr. Bauny.'

'Do you want a still more authentic authority?' he went on. 'Look at this book by Fr. Annat. It is his latest against M. Arnauld; read page 34, where it is turned down, and look at the lines I have marked in pencil; they are worth their weight in gold.'

So I read these words: 'Anyone with no thought of God, or his sins, or any apprehension' that is, according to his explanation, any knowledge, 'of an obligation to perform acts of love towards God, or acts of contrition, has no actual grace to perform these acts; but it is also true that he commits no sin if he omits them, and that if he is damned it will not be as punishment for such an omission.' And a few lines further on: 'And the same may be said of a culpable commission.'

'Do you see,' said the Father, 'how he speaks of sins of omission and commission? For he does not forget anything. What do you say to that?'

'How I like that!' I answered. 'What splendid consequences I can see! I can already work out some of the results; how many mysteries lie open before me! I can see incomparably more

people justified by this ignorance, and forgetfulness towards God, than by grace and the sacraments. But, Father, are you not giving me false cause for joy? Is this not something like the *sufficiency* which does not suffice? I am dreadfully afraid of some qualification; I have been caught like that once already. Are you speaking in all sincerity?'

'What!' said the Father, becoming excited, 'This is no joking matter; there is no ambiguity here.'

'I am not joking,' I told him, 'it is just that I am afraid because I want it so much.'

'Well,' he said, 'to reassure yourself, just look at the works of M. Le Moine, who openly taught this in the Sorbonne. He learned it from us, it is true, but he sorted it out properly. What a solid job he made of it! He teaches that "for an action to be sinful all the following things must take place in the soul." Read and weigh every word.'

So I read in Latin what you see here in French:

'On the one hand God imparts to the soul a certain love which inclines it towards the thing commanded, and on the other rebellious concupiscence invites it to do the opposite. 2. God inspires the soul with a knowledge of its weakness. 3. God inspires it with knowledge of the physician who is to cure it. 4. God inspires it with the desire to be cured. 5. God inspires it with the desire to pray and implore his help.'

'And unless all these things take place in the soul,' said the Jesuit, 'the action is not strictly sinful, and cannot be imputed, as M. Le Moine says in the same place and in all that follows. Do you want still further authorities? Here you are.'

'But all modern,' said my Jansenist quietly.

'So I see,' said I.

And I addressed the Father as follows:

'Oh Father, what a blessing for some of the people I know! I must bring them along to you. You can hardly have met people with fewer sins, for they never think of God; vice has warped their reason: "They have never known their infirmity

nor the physician who can cure it. They have never thought of desiring spiritual health, still less of praying God to grant it;" so that they are still in a state of baptismal innocence according to M. Le Moine. "The thought of loving God has never entered their heads, nor that of being contrite for their sins;" thus, according to Fr. Annat, they have committed no sin through being without charity or repentance; their life is a continual search for pleasure of every kind, uninterrupted by the slightest twinge of remorse. Such excesses had led me to believe that their damnation was assured; but I learn from you, Father, that these same excesses ensure their salvation. Blessings on your head, Father, for justifying people in this way! Others teach how to cure souls by painful austerities, but you show that the souls which one would have believed to be most desperately ill are in the best of health. What an excellent path to happiness in this world and the next! I had always thought that the less one thought of God the more sinful one was. But, from what I can see, once one has managed to stop thinking of him altogether the purity of all one's future conduct becomes assured. Let us have none of these half-sinners, with some love of virtue; they will all be damned. But as for these avowed sinners, hardened sinners, unadulterated, complete and absolute sinners, hell cannot hold them; they have cheated the devil by surrendering to him.'

The good Father, who saw clearly enough the connexion between these consequences and his principles, got out of it very neatly, and without losing his temper, whether out of kindness or prudence, merely said to me:

'To explain how we avoid such snags, let me tell you that we do indeed say that these impious people whom you mention would be without sin if they had never entertained thoughts of conversion or desired to give themselves to God. But we maintain that they have all done so, and that God has never allowed anyone to sin without first making him see the evil he is going to do, and desire either to avoid sin or at least to implore God's

help in enabling him to avoid it; and the Jansenists are the only ones who say the opposite.'

'Well now, Father,' I replied, 'does the Jansenist heresy consist in denying that every time one sins a twinge of remorse comes to disturb one's conscience, despite which one still "goes ahead and presses on" as Fr. Bauny puts it? That is a funny reason for being a heretic! I certainly used to believe that one was damned for not having good thoughts; but that we should be damned for not believing that everyone has such thoughts never entered my mind. But, Father, I feel obliged in conscience to enlighten you and tell you that there are thousands of people who never have such desires, who sin with no regrets, who rejoice and glory in their sin. And who can know more about them than you? It is not as if you never confessed one of those of whom I am speaking; for it is among persons of rank that one usually meets them. But, Father, beware of the dangerous results of your principles. Do you not realize the effect it may have on those libertines whose only aim is to cast doubts on religion? What a pretext you give them when you tell them, as an article of faith, that every time they commit a sin they feel a warning and an inner desire to desist from it! For is it not obvious that once convinced by their own experience that your teaching is false on that point, which you claim to be an article of faith, they will extend the consequences to all the rest? They will say that if you are wrong on one article you are suspect on all; thus you will oblige them to conclude either that religion is false, or at least that you are not well informed about it.'

But my companion, supporting my argument, said:

'You would do well, Father, if you want to preserve your doctrine, not to explain as clearly as you have just done what you mean by actual grace. For how could you openly declare without becoming quite discredited that "no one sins unless, first knowing his infirmity and the physician, he desires to be cured and to ask this of God"? Will anyone believe, because

you say so, that those who are plunged into a life of avarice, shamelessness, blasphemy, duelling, revenge, theft, sacrilege, genuinely desire to embrace chastity, humility and other Christian virtues?

'Will anyone suppose that the philosophers who boasted so proudly of the powers of nature knew its infirmity and the physician? Are you going to say that those who maintained as a certain fact "that God does not bestow virtue and no one has ever asked it of him" ever thought of asking it of him themselves?

'Who could believe that the Epicureans, who denied divine Providence, had any impulse to pray to God, saying as they did: "that it was insulting him to call upon him in our needs, as if he were capable of spending his time on thinking about us"?

'And finally how are we to imagine that idolaters and atheists whenever they are tempted into sin, that is countless times throughout their lives, have any desire to pray to the true God, whom they do not know, to give them the true virtues of which they are ignorant?'

'Yes,' said the good Father firmly, 'we will say so, and rather than say it is possible to sin without seeing that one is doing wrong and desiring the opposite virtue, we will maintain that everyone, ungodly and unbelievers alike, has such inspirations and desires each time he is tempted. For you could never prove, at least from Scripture, that it is not so.'

I spoke up at this and said to him:

'What, Father! Must we appeal to Scripture to prove something so obvious? This is not a matter of faith, nor even of logic. It is simply a fact. We see it, we know it, we feel it.'

But my Jansenist, keeping within the terms laid down by the Father, addressed him thus:

'If you are willing, Father, to submit only to Scripture, I agree, but at least do not resist it; since it is written: "that God has not revealed his judgements to the Gentiles, and that he has

suffered them to err in their ways" do not say that God has enlightened those who, as Holy Scripture assures us, "have been left in darkness and in the shadow of death."

'Is it not enough to make you realize the error of your principle to see St Paul calling himself "chief among sinners" because of a sin which he declared was committed "out of ignorance and not without zeal"?

'Is it not enough to see from the Gospel that those who crucified Christ needed the forgiveness which he begged for them, although they did not know the wickedness of their action, and would never have done it, according to St Paul, if they had known?

'Is not Christ's warning, that there will be those who persecute the Church and believe that they are doing God a service in striving to destroy it, enough to make us realize that this sin, the greatest of all according to the Apostle, may be committed by those who are so far from knowing that they are sinning that they would believe it a sin to do otherwise? Finally, is it not enough that Christ himself taught us that there are two sorts of sinners, those who sin knowingly and those who sin unknowingly, and that they will all be punished, though admittedly in different ways?'

The good Father, hard pressed by so much evidence from Scripture to which he had appealed, began to give ground; and allowing that the ungodly sin without any inspiration said to us:

'You will at least not deny that the righteous never sin unless God gives them . . .'

'You are retreating,' I said, interrupting him, 'you are retreating, Father, and giving up the general principle; you realize that it is not valid any more as regards sinners and you would like to come to terms and make it at least remain applicable to the righteous. But in that case I can see its use very much reduced, for there will be hardly anyone left to whom it will apply, and it is almost a waste of time arguing about it.'

But my companion, who had such a ready answer to everything that I think he must have studied the whole question that very morning, answered:

'That, Father, is the last line of retreat for those of your party who wanted to make an issue of it: but you are no safer there. You are no better off with the example of the righteous. Does anyone doubt that they often inadvertently fall into sins of surprise? Do we not learn from the saints themselves how many secret snares concupiscence lays for them, and how commonly it happens that, sober as they may be, they yield to pleasure what they think they are only yielding to necessity, as St Augustine says of himself in his *Confessions*?

'How often we see the most zealous aroused in controversy to acrimonious defence of their own interests, when all that their conscience tells them at the time is that they behave like this solely in the interests of truth, and when they only realize the true facts much later!

'But what are we to say of those who eagerly pursue things which are really bad because they believe them to be really good, as can be illustrated from the history of the Church? According to the Fathers, this does not stop them from having sinned on such occasions?

'And but for this how could the righteous have secret sins? How could it be true that God alone knows how serious and how many these are, that no one knows whether he deserves to be loved or hated, and that the most saintly must always remain in fear and trembling, although they do not feel in any way guilty, as St Paul says of himself?

'You must therefore see, Father, that the examples of righteous and sinners alike upset your theory, that in order to sin it is necessary to know the evil and love the opposite virtue; since the passion of the ungodly for vices is sufficient evidence that they have no desire for virtue, and the love of the righteous for virtue is strong evidence that they are not always aware of the sins that they commit every day, according to Scripture.

'And so true is it that this is how the righteous sin that great saints rarely sin in any other way. For with such pure souls, who so carefully and eagerly avoid the slightest thing that might be displeasing to God, as soon as they become aware of it, and who nevertheless sin several times a day, how is it conceivable that each time before they fall "they know their infirmity on that occasion and the physician, and desire good health and to pray God for help", and that despite all these inspirations such zealous souls should "still press on" and commit the sin?

'You must therefore conclude, Father, that neither sinners nor even the most righteous always have such knowledge, desires and inspirations every time they sin; in other words, to use your terms, they do not always have actual grace on every occasion when they sin. And stop saying, with your modern authors, that it is impossible to sin when ignorant of righteousness; say instead, with St Augustine and the ancient Fathers, that it is impossible not to sin when ignorant of righteousness: "*He must inevitably sin who is ignorant of righteousness.*"'

The good Father, seeing as many obstacles to the maintenance of his opinion regarding the righteous as regarding sinners, did not lose heart for all that. After a moment's reflection he said to us:

'I am going to convince you all right.'

Picking up his Fr. Bauny again at the very passage he had shown us, he said:

'Just look at the reasons on which he bases his thought. I knew very well that he was not short of good proofs. Read his quotation from Aristotle, and you will see that after such an explicit authority you must either burn the books of the prince of philosophers or follow our opinion. Listen then to the principles established by Fr. Bauny. First of all he says "that an action can incur no blame when it is involuntary".'

'I admit that,' said my friend.

'That is the first time,' I said to them, 'that I have seen you agreeing. Leave it at that, Father, if you take my advice.'

'That would do no good,' he said, 'for we must know what conditions are necessary for an action to be voluntary.'

'I am very much afraid,' I answered, 'that you will fall out on that point.'

'Do not worry,' he said, 'this is a certainty. Aristotle is on my side. Listen carefully to what Fr. Bauny says: "In order for an action to be voluntary it must proceed from someone who sees, knows and appreciates whatever evil and good lies therein. *The voluntary*, as we say in common with the Philosopher" (you know of course that that is Aristotle, he said, squeezing my hand) "*is that which is done by someone knowing the constitutive elements of the action:* consequently, when the will at random and without discussion is inclined to desire or detest, do or not do something before the intellect has been able to see if there is any harm in desiring or avoiding, doing or not doing it, such an action is neither good nor bad, inasmuch as before such inspection, view and mental reflection upon the good and bad qualities of the thing concerned, the action of performing it is not voluntary."'

'Well now,' the Father said to me, 'are you satisfied?'

'It seems,' I replied, 'that Aristotle is of the same opinion as Fr. Bauny, but that still surprises me. What, Father! It is not enough for a voluntary action to know what one is doing, and to do it only because one wishes to do it, but one must furthermore "see, know and appreciate what good and evil lies in the action"? If that is so, there are hardly any voluntary actions in life, for one hardly ever thinks of all that. How many oaths are sworn in gambling, how many excesses committed during debauchery, how much wild behaviour at carnival time, none of which is voluntary, and consequently neither good nor bad, because unaccompanied by these "mental reflections on the good or bad qualities" of what one is doing! But, Father, can Aristotle possibly have thought this? For I had heard that he was a clever man.'

'I am going to enlighten you,' said my Jansenist.

Having asked the Father for Aristotle's *Ethics* he opened it at the beginning of Book 3, where Fr. Bauny had taken the words quoted, and said to the good Father:

'I will forgive you for taking Fr. Bauny's word for it that this was Aristotle's view. You would have changed your mind if you had read him yourself. It is certainly true that he teaches that "for an action to be voluntary one must know the constitutive elements of that action, *singula in quibus est actio*". But what else does he mean by that than the particular circumstances of the action, as is clearly proved by the examples he gives, for the only ones he quotes are those in which some circumstance or other is unknown, such as "a person wishing to demonstrate a machine discharges a dart which hurts someone; and Meropus, who killed his son when he thought he was killing his enemy" and other similar cases?

'You can see from that what sort of ignorance makes actions involuntary; and that it relates only to particular circumstances, and is called by theologians, as you very well know, Father, *ignorance of the fact*. But as for *ignorance of the law*, that is ignorance of the good and evil in the action, which is all we are concerned with, let us see if Aristotle is of the same opinion as Fr. Bauny. Here are the philosopher's words: "All the wicked are in ignorance of what they should do and what they should shun; and this is just what makes them wicked and vicious. That is why it cannot be said that, because a man does not know what it is appropriate to do in fulfilment of his duty, his action is involuntary. For such ignorance in the choice of good or evil does not cause an action to be involuntary, but simply vicious. The same must be said of someone who is generally ignorant of the dictates of his duty, since such ignorance makes men culpable, not excusable. Thus the ignorance which makes actions involuntary and excusable is only that which concerns the fact in particular and its individual circumstances. For then we forgive a man, and excuse him and consider him as having acted against his will."

'After that, Father, will you still tell me that Aristotle follows your opinion? And who will not be surprised to see a pagan philosopher more enlightened than your doctors on a matter so important for the whole of morality, and even for the direction of souls, as the knowledge of the conditions making acts voluntary and involuntary, thus excusing or not excusing them from sin? Give up hoping for anything, Father, from this prince of philosophers, and submit to the prince of theologians, who thus decides this point, in Book I of his *Retractations*, ch. XV: "Those who sin through ignorance perform their action only because they want to do so, although they sin without wishing to sin. Thus even this sin of ignorance can only be committed by the will of the person committing it, but by a will directed towards the action and not towards sin; nevertheless this does not prevent the action being a sin, because for that it is enough to have done what one was obliged not to do."'

The Father looked surprised, and even more at the passage from Aristotle than the one from St Augustine. But as he was debating what he should say, he had word that Mme la Maréchale de . . . and Mme la Marquise de . . . were asking for him. And so, as he left us in haste, he said:

'I will have a word with our Fathers about it. They will certainly find some answer. We have some very subtle men here.'

We understood him very well; and when I was alone with my friend, I expressed my amazement at the upheavals that such a doctrine introduced into morality. To which he replied that he was amazed at my amazement.

'Do you not yet know that their excesses in morality are much greater than in doctrine?'

He gave me some strange examples, and put off the rest for another time. I hope that what I learn will be the subject of our next discussion.

I am, etc.

FIFTH LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 20 March 1656

SIR,

Here is what I promised you. Here is a first outline of the morality of the good Jesuit Fathers, 'these men outstanding in doctrine and wisdom, who are all guided by divine wisdom, which is more certain than all philosophy'. You may think that I am joking, but I say this quite seriously, or rather they say it themselves. I am simply copying down their words,* as I do for the rest of this eulogy: 'This is a society of men, or rather of angels, foretold by Isaiah in these words: *Go swift and ready angels.*' Is this prophecy not quite clear? 'They are eagle spirits, a flight of phoenixes (for a recent author has shown that there is more than one phoenix). They have changed the face of Christendom.' We must believe this since they say so, and you will see it for yourself from the rest of this letter, which will tell you about their precepts.

I wanted to be properly briefed on this subject. I did not rely on what our friend had told me about it. I wanted to see them in person; but I found that he had told me nothing but the truth. I do not think he ever tells a lie, as you will see from the account of these interviews.

In the one I had with him he told me such absurd things that I found it hard to believe him; but he showed me them in the books of these Fathers, so that the only excuse I could find for them was that these were the views of a few individuals and could not fairly be imputed to the whole body. Indeed I assured him that I knew some whose strictness was just as great as the laxity of those whom he cited. It was at this point that he disclosed to me the spirit of the Society, which is not generally

* From the Jesuits' volume on their first centenary, *Imago primi saeculi.*

known; and you may be glad to hear about it. This is what he told me:

'You think you are doing them a great favour when you show that some of their Fathers are as faithful to the precepts of the Gospels as others are opposed; and from this you conclude that these free and easy opinions are not applicable to the whole Society. I am well aware of that. For if that were the case, they would not tolerate anyone who was so much against them. But since there are also some who profess so immoral a doctrine, you must similarly conclude that the spirit of the Society is not one of Christian strictness. For if that were the case they would not tolerate anyone who was so opposed to it.'

'Well,' I answered, 'then whatever can be the purpose of the whole body? No doubt they have none laid down, and everyone is free to say at random what he thinks.'

'That is not possible,' he said. 'So great a body could not survive if it behaved so rashly and did not have a soul to rule and regulate its movements. Besides, they have a special rule forbidding them to print anything without the consent of their superiors.'

'What!' said I, 'how can the same superiors give their consent to such different precepts?'

'That is what I have to tell you,' he replied.

'You must realize that it is not their object to corrupt morals; that is not their policy. But their sole aim is not to reform them either. That would be a bad policy. This is how they see it. They have a good enough opinion of themselves to believe that it is useful and virtually essential for the good of religion that they should enjoy universal credit and govern the consciences of all. And as strict evangelical precepts are suitable for governing certain sorts of persons, they make use of them on those occasions which serve their purpose. But as these same precepts do not fit in with the ideas of most people, for these they omit them, so as to have something to please everybody.

'This is why they find it necessary, having to deal with people

from every walk of life and such different nationalities, to have casuists to match such great variety.

'You can readily see from this principle that if they only had lax casuists they would frustrate their chief aim, which is to embrace everyone, since the really pious want stricter guidance. But as there are not many like that, they need only a few strict directors to look after them. They keep these few for the few who want them; whereas the multitude of lax casuists is available for those who want laxism.

'It is with such "obliging and accommodating" conduct, as Fr. Petau calls it, that they meet everyone with open arms. For if someone comes to them determined to restore his ill-gotten gains, they do not dissuade him, never fear; on the contrary, they will praise and support so holy a resolve. But if someone else comes along wanting absolution without making restitution, it has to be a very difficult case if they cannot find some means of doing this, which they will guarantee.

'Thus they keep all their friends and defend themselves against all their enemies. For if they are criticized for extreme laxity, they at once publicly produce their austere directors and books they have written on the rigour of the Christian law; and simple people and those who go no deeper into things are satisfied with such evidence.

'So they have something for everyone, and are so good at matching their answer to what they are asked, that when they are in countries where a crucified God is regarded as folly, they suppress the scandal of the Cross, and preach only Christ in glory, and not Christ in agony; as they have done in India and China, where they have even allowed Christians to practise idolatry, by the ingenious idea of getting them to hide under their clothes an image of Christ, to which they are taught to apply mentally the worship paid publicly to the idol Chacim-Choan and their Keum-fucum;* see the charge laid by the Dominican Gravina, also attested by the memorandum in

* Confucius.

Spanish, presented to Philip IV of Spain by the Franciscans of the Philippine Islands, quoted by Thomas Hurtado in his book *Martyrdom for the Faith*, p. 427. As a result the Congregation of cardinals *de propaganda fide* was obliged to forbid the Jesuits specifically, on pain of excommunication, to permit the worship of idols on any pretext whatsoever, or to conceal the mystery of the Cross from those receiving religious instruction from them, expressly ordering them to admit no one to baptism until thus instructed, and to display in their churches the image of the crucifix, as is fully set out in this congregation's decree, issued on 9 July 1646, signed by Cardinal Caponi.

'This is how they have spread all over the world, thanks to *the doctrine of probable opinions*, the source and basis of all this disorder. This is something you must learn from them directly. For they do not conceal it from anyone, any more than all you have just heard, except that they cloak their human politic prudence under the pretence of divine Christian prudence; as if the faith, and the tradition which maintains it, were not always one and immutable in all times and in all places; as if it were the rule that should bend itself to suit the subject which ought to conform to it, and as if all that souls had to do to be purified of their blemishes was to corrupt the law of the Lord, whereas "the law of the Lord, which is spotless and holy, is that which should convert souls", and mould them to its salutary instructions!

'So please go and see these good Fathers, and I am sure that you will easily recognize in their moral laxism the cause of their doctrine regarding grace. You will see Christian virtues so disregarded and so bereft of the charity which is their life and soul; you will see so many crimes mitigated and such disorders tolerated, that you will no longer find it strange that they maintain that all men always have enough grace to lead godly lives, as they understand it. Since their morality is wholly pagan, natural powers suffice for its observance. When we maintain the necessity of efficacious grace, we give other virtues as its

object. It is not simply to cure some vices by others; it is not merely to get men to practise the external duties of religion; it is for the sake of a higher virtue than that of the Pharisees and the wisest pagans. Law and reason are grace enough for such results. But to free the soul from worldly affections, to remove it from what it holds most dear, to make it die unto itself, to bring and unite it solely and immutably to God, this can only be the work of an almighty hand. And it is just as unreasonable to claim that we are always fully capable of this as it would be to deny that these virtues stripped of the love of God, which these good Fathers confuse with Christian virtues, are in our power.'

This is how he spoke to me, and in much distress; for he is deeply grieved by all these disorders. For my part I gave the good Fathers credit for so excellent a policy; and on his advice I went off to find one of the Society's able casuists. He is an old friend of mine, with whom I specially wanted to renew acquaintance. Having learned how to treat them, I had no difficulty in setting him off. First of all he embraced me warmly, for he is still very fond of me; and after talking of this and that, I took the present season [of Lent] as an opportunity to learn from him something about fasting, as a way of coming round imperceptibly to the real point. I told him therefore that I found fasting a great burden. He exhorted me to make an effort; but, as I continued to complain, he was touched, and set about looking for some reason for dispensation. In fact he offered me several, which would not do, when finally it occurred to him to ask me whether I did not find it hard to sleep without having had supper.

'Yes, Father,' I said, 'and that often obliges me to have a collation at midday and supper in the evening.'

'I am so glad,' he replied, 'to have found a way of giving you relief without sinning. There you are, you are not obliged to fast. I do not want you just to believe me; come along to the library.'

I went there, and taking down a book he said:

'Here is your proof, and, goodness knows, it is a good one! This is Escobar.'

'Who is Escobar, Father?' I said.

'What! you do not know who Escobar is? The member of our Society who compiled this Moral Theology from 24 of our Fathers; which makes him, in his preface, present the book as an allegory of "the one in Revelation sealed with seven seals"? And he says that "Jesus offers it thus sealed to the four beasts, Suarez, Vasquez, Molina, Valentia, in the presence of 24 Jesuits representing the 24 elders."'

He read out the whole allegory, which he considered very apt and which gave me a good idea of the excellence of this work. Then, when he had looked up his passage on fasting, he said:

'Here it is: "Is someone who cannot sleep unless he has had supper obliged to fast? Certainly not." Are you satisfied?'

'Not completely,' I said, 'for I can manage to fast if I have a collation in the morning and supper in the evening.'

'See how it goes on then,' he said, 'they have thought of everything. "And what are we to say if someone can quite well make do with a collation in the morning if he has supper in the evening?"'

'There we are.'

'"He is still not obliged to fast. For no one is obliged to change the order of his meals."'

'What an excellent argument!' I said.

'But tell me,' he went on, 'do you drink much wine?'

'No, Father,' I said, 'it does not agree with me.'

'I said that,' he answered, 'to let you know that you could drink wine in the morning, and whenever you liked, without breaking your fast; and that is always nourishing. Here is the decision: "May one, without breaking one's fast, drink wine whenever one likes, and even in quantity? Yes, and even hippocras." I had not remembered that hippocras,' he said, 'I must put it down in my collection.'

'What a splendid fellow, that Escobar,' I said.

'Everyone likes him,' answered the Father. 'He asks such charming questions! Look at this one, which is in the same place: "If a man is uncertain whether he is twenty-one is he obliged to fast? – No. But if I am twenty-one tonight at 1 a.m., and tomorrow is a fast day, will I be obliged to fast tomorrow? No. For you could eat as much as you liked from midnight until 1 a.m., since you would not yet be twenty-one; and as you are thus entitled to break the fast, you are not obliged to observe it."'

'How entertaining!' I said.

'One cannot put it down,' he replied. 'I spend days and nights reading him, it is all I do.'

The good Father, seeing my pleasure, was delighted and went on:

'Just look at this bit from Filiutius, who is one of the 24 Jesuits: "If someone has tired himself doing something, like going after a girl, is he obliged to fast? Not at all. But if he has deliberately tired himself in order to be therefore dispensed from the fast, must he keep it? Even if he has formed that intention, he is not obliged to fast." Well, well! Would you have believed it?'

'To tell you the truth, Father,' I said, 'I still do not really believe it. You mean to say that it is not a sin to fail to fast when one is able to? That one is allowed to look for occasions of sinning, instead of being obliged to avoid them? That would be very convenient.'

'No, not always,' he said; 'it depends.'

'Depends on what?' I asked.

'Ah ha!' replied the Father. 'And if it were somewhat inconvenient to avoid these occasions, would one be obliged to do so in your view? That is not the view of Fr. Bauny at any rate; here it is: "One must not refuse absolution to those who remain in proximate occasions of sin, if they are so placed that they cannot turn from their ways without giving rise to

gossip or bringing on themselves some inconvenience thereby."'

'I am so glad, Father; it only remains to say that one may deliberately seek out such occasions, since one is allowed not to avoid them.'

'Even that is also sometimes allowed,' he added. 'The celebrated casuist Bazile Ponce said so, and Fr. Bauny quotes him and approves his opinion, as you see in the *Treatise on Penitence*, q. 4, p. 94: "We may look for an occasion directly and for its own sake, *primo et per se*, when the spiritual or temporal good of ourselves or our neighbour leads us to do so."'

'I really seem to be dreaming,' I said, 'when I hear religious talk like this! Now, Father, tell me, in all conscience, do you agree with that view?'

'Not really,' the Father told me.

'Then,' I went on, 'you are speaking against your conscience?'

'Not at all,' he said; 'I was not speaking about this according to my conscience, but according to that of Ponce and Fr. Bauny. And you could safely follow them, for they are able men.'

'What, Father! because they put these three lines into their books, it has become permissible to seek occasions of sin? I thought that the only rule to be followed was Scripture and the tradition of the Church, but not your casuists.'

'Good Lord!' exclaimed the Father. 'You remind me of those Jansenists! Can not Fr. Bauny and Bazile Ponce make their opinions probable?'

'I am not satisfied with probability,' I said, 'I want certainty.'

'I can see,' said the good Father, 'that you do not know what the doctrine of probable opinions is. You would talk differently if you did. I really must tell you about it. You will not have wasted your time coming here; without that you could not understand anything. It is the foundation and ABC of all our moral teaching.'

I was delighted to see him slip into the subject I had been

hoping for; after telling him so, I asked him to explain what a probable opinion was.

'Our authors will give you a better answer than I can,' he said. 'This is how they all speak about it in general, among others our 24: "An opinion is called probable when it is founded on reasons of some importance. Whence it sometimes happens that one really grave doctor can make an opinion probable." And this is the reason: "For a man specially devoted to study would not expound an opinion unless he were attracted to it by some good and sufficient reason."'

'And so,' I said, 'a single doctor can turn conscience round and upside-down as he pleases, and always quite safely.'

'It is no laughing matter,' he said, 'and you must not think of challenging this doctrine. When the Jansenists tried to do so, it was a waste of their time. It is too well established. Listen to Sanchez, one of the most famous of our Fathers: "You may perhaps doubt whether the authority of one good and learned doctor makes an opinion probable. I reply that it does. And this is vouched for by Angelus, Sylvestrius Navarrus, Emmanuel Sa, etc. This is how they prove it. A probable opinion is one with a basis of some importance. Now the authority of a pious and learned doctor is of no small importance, but rather of great importance. For (note this reason) if the evidence of such a man is of great weight for convincing us that something has taken place, for example in Rome, why should it not be the same on some doubtful point of morality?"'

'What a funny comparison,' I said, 'between things of this world and those of conscience!'

'Be patient: Sanchez answers that one in the lines immediately following: "And the restriction applied by certain authors is not to my liking, namely that the authority of such a doctor is sufficient in matters of human law, but not in those of divine law. For it carries great weight in both."'

'Father,' I said to him frankly, 'I cannot take this rule seriously. What assurance have I that, given the liberty your

doctors allow themselves in examining things rationally, what may appear certain to one will appear so to all the others? Judgements differ so widely . . .'

'You do not understand,' said the Father interrupting me; 'they very often do have different opinions; but that does not matter. Each one makes his own opinion probable and safe. Of course everyone knows that they do not all agree. And that is all to the good. On the contrary they almost never do agree. There are few questions on which you do not find one saying yes, the other no. And in all such cases each of the contrary opinions is probable. And that is why Diana says on a certain subject: "Ponce and Sanchez disagree; but because they were both learned men, each of them makes his own opinion probable."'

'But, Father,' I said, 'one must be at a loss to choose then!'

'Not at all,' he said, 'you have only to follow the more attractive opinion.'

'Supposing the other is more probable?'

'No matter.'

'And if the other is more certain?'

'No matter,' the Father went on; 'here is a good explanation. It is by Emmanuel Sa of our Society: "One may do what one thinks lawful according to a probable opinion, although the contrary is more certain. Now, the opinion of one grave doctor is sufficient."'

'And if an opinion is at once less probable and less certain, is it lawful to follow it, forsaking what one believes to be more probable and more certain?'

'Yes, yet again,' he said: 'listen to Filiutius, the great Roman Jesuit: "It is lawful to follow the least probable opinion, although it is the least certain. This is the opinion commonly held by modern authors." Is that not clear?'

'We have certainly got plenty of room now,' I said, 'thanks to your probable opinions, reverend Father. We have a fine freedom of conscience. And what about you casuists, do you have the same freedom of answer?'

'Yes,' said he, 'we answer what we like, or rather what our questioners like. For here are our rules, taken from our Fathers Layman, Vasquez, Sanchez and our 24. Here are Layman's words, followed by the book of our 24: "A doctor, when consulted, may give advice not merely probable according to his opinion, but contrary to his opinion, if it is considered probable by others, when this view, contrary to his own, happens to prove more favourable and attractive to the person consulting him. *Si forte haec illi favorabilior seu exoptatior sit.* But I say further that it will not be unreasonable for him to give to those who consult him an opinion held to be probable by some learned person, even though he is convinced that it is absolutely wrong."'

'Splendid, Father, your doctrine is most accommodating. What! to be able to answer yes or no as one chooses! Such an advantage cannot be overestimated. And now I see the benefit you derive from the contrary opinions held by your doctors on every subject. For one of them is always helpful, and the other never harmful. If you do not find what you want on the one side, you jump over to the other, and never a risk.'

'That is true,' he said; 'and so we can always say with Diana, who found Father Bauny on his side when Father Lugo was against him: "*Saepe, premente deo, fert deus alter opem.* If one god presses us hard, another delivers us."'

'I quite understand,' I said. 'But a difficulty occurs to me. Supposing someone consulted one of your doctors and adopted from him a somewhat broadminded opinion, perhaps he will be caught out if he happens on a confessor who does not share it, and refuses absolution unless he has a change of heart. Have you provided for that, Father?'

'What do you think?' he answered. 'They are obliged to absolve their penitents who hold probable opinions, on pain of mortal sin, to ensure that they do so. This is clearly shown by our Fathers, among others Father Bauny: "When the penitent follows a probable opinion (he says) the confessor must absolve

him, although his own opinion is contrary to that of the penitent."'

'But he does not say that it is a mortal sin not to absolve him.'

'How quick you are!' he said; 'listen to what follows: he expressly concludes: "To refuse absolution to a penitent acting in accordance with a probable opinion is a sin, which by its very nature is mortal." And in confirmation of this view he quotes three of our most famous Fathers, Suarez, Vasquez, and Sanchez.'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'how prudently you arrange things! There is no more to fear. No confessor would ever dare now to disobey. I did not know you had the power of prescribing on pain of damnation. I thought that you were only able to take away sins; I did not imagine that you could introduce them too. But you are omnipotent, as far as I can see.'

'You are not speaking properly,' he said. 'We do not introduce sins, we only note them. I have noticed two or three times already that you are not a very good Scholastic.'

'Be that as it may, Father, that has quite cleared up that doubt. But I have another to put to you. I do not know how you manage when the Fathers of the Church are against one of your casuists.'

'You do not understand much about it,' he said. 'The Fathers were good for the morality of their time; but they are too remote for the morality of ours. It is not they who lay down the rules any more, it is the modern casuists. Listen to our Father Cellot, who in this follows our famous Father Reginaldus: "In moral questions the modern casuists are preferable to the old Fathers, although these were closer to the Apostles." In accordance with this principle Diana speaks like this: "Are the holders of benefices obliged to make restitution of an income which they misapply? The ancients said yes, but the moderns say no; so let us stick to this opinion which discharges them from the obligation of making restitution."'

'These are fine words,' I said, 'and full of comfort for many people.'

'We leave the Fathers,' he said, 'to those who treat of Positive Theology; but as for us, directors of consciences, we seldom read them, and in our writings only quote the modern casuists. Look at Diana, who has written a tremendous lot; at the beginning of his books he lists the authors quoted. There are 296 of them, and the oldest goes back eighty years.'

'So this has come into the world since your Society?' I said.

'More or less,' he replied.

'In other words, Father, your arrival has meant the disappearance of St Augustine, St Chrysostom, St Ambrose, St Jerome and the others as far as morality is concerned. But let me at least know the names of their successors: who are these modern authors?'

'They are very able and famous men,' he said. 'There is Villalobos, Conink, Llamas, Achoker, Dealkozer, Dellacruz, Vera-Cruz, Ugolin, Tambourin, Fernandez, Martinez, Suarez, Henriquez, Vasquez, Lopez, Gomez, Sanchez, de Vechis, de Grassis, de Grassalis, de Pitigianis, de Graphaeis, Squilanti, Bizozeri, Barcola, de Bobadilla, Simancha, Perez de Lara, Aldretta, Lorca, de Scarcia, Quaranta, Scophra, Pedrezza, Cabrezza, Bisbe, Dias, de Clavasio, Villagut, Adam a Manden, Iribarne Binsfeld, Volfangi a Vorberg, Vosthery, Strevesdorf.'

'Oh Father!' I said, quite alarmed, 'were all these men Christians?'

'Christians indeed!' he answered. 'Was I not just saying that these are the only ones through whom we govern Christendom today?'

I felt rather upset at that, but gave him no sign, and simply asked him if all these authors were Jesuits.

'No,' he said, 'but no matter; they still said a lot of good things. It is true that most of them took or copied them from our own people; but we do not make it a point of honour; besides, they are always quoting our Fathers, and in laudatory terms. Look at Diana, who does not belong to our Society; when he speaks of Vasquez he calls him "the phoenix of

spirits". And somewhere he says that "Vasquez alone is worth as much to him as all the rest of mankind put together, *Instar omnium*." And all our Fathers frequently use the good Diana; for if you really understand our doctrine of probability, you will readily see that that makes no difference. On the contrary, we have been very anxious that non-Jesuit authors should be able to make their opinions probable, so that they should not all be imputed to us. And thus when any author at all has advanced an opinion, we are entitled to adopt it, if we wish, by the doctrine of probable opinions, and we are not responsible for it when the author is not one of our body.'

'I understand all that,' I said. 'I can quite see that you are ready to welcome anything except the ancient Fathers, and that you are masters of the field. You have only to keep running. But I foresee three or four great inconveniences and powerful obstacles in your way.'

'What?' said the Father, quite astonished.

'There are,' I answered, 'Holy Scripture, the popes and councils, which you cannot disown, and which all follow the one way of the Gospel.'

'Is that all?' he said. 'You frightened me. Do you think we have not foreseen something so obvious and made provision for it? I am really surprised at you, thinking that we are against Scripture, popes and councils! I must enlighten you to the contrary. I should be very sorry for you to think us lacking in our duty. No doubt you got this idea from some opinions of our Fathers which apparently clash with their decisions, although that is not the case. But to understand how they agree, we should need more leisure. I would not like you to retain the wrong impression of us. If you would like us to meet again tomorrow, I will clear up this point for you.'

That ended the interview, as it must end this discussion; it is quite enough for one letter too. I am sure this will satisfy you while you wait for the sequel.

I am, etc.

SIXTH LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 10 April 1656

SIR,

I told you at the end of my last letter that the good Jesuit Father had promised to show me how the casuists reconcile the contradictions arising between their opinions and the decisions of the popes, councils and Scripture. He did indeed explain it to me on my second visit, which I am now going to describe. I will do this in greater detail than the previous one, for I took along a notebook to record the passages quoted, and I was very sorry not to have had one with me the first time. All the same, if you have any trouble with any of those I quoted in my other letter, let me know and I will easily satisfy your request.

The good Father spoke to me then as follows:

'One of the ways in which we reconcile such apparent contradictions is by the interpretation of some term. For example, Pope Gregory XIV declared that murderers are unworthy to enjoy sanctuary in churches, and must be dragged out. Yet our 24 Elders say on p. 660: "That all those who kill treacherously should not incur the penalty of this Bull." That may seem contradictory to you, but it can be reconciled by interpreting the word "murderer" as they do in these words: "Are not murderers unworthy to enjoy the privilege of sanctuary? Yes, according to the Bull of Gregory XIV. But we understand by the word 'murderers' those who have received money to kill persons treacherously." Whence it comes about that those who kill without receiving any reward, but merely to oblige their friends, are not called murderers. Likewise it is written in the Gospels: "Give in alms what is superfluous." Yet several casuists have found a means of discharging people of the greatest wealth from the obligation of almsgiving. That may seem to you contradictory as well, but it is easy to show that it

is consistent by interpreting the word "superfluity" so that it hardly ever happens that anyone has any. And that is what the learned Vasquez does as follows, in his *Treatise on Alms*, ch. iv: "What persons in high society retain to improve their status and that of their relatives is not called superfluous. And that is why it will be hard to find any superfluity among persons in high society, or even kings."

'Diana too, quoting these same words of Vasquez (for he usually bases himself on our Fathers) very aptly concludes: "that on the question of whether the rich are obliged to give alms out of their superfluity, although the affirmative is correct, it will never, or hardly ever, happen that in practice it becomes obligatory."'

'I quite see, Father, that that follows from Vasquez' doctrine. But how would you answer the objection that in order to work out one's salvation it would be just as safe a way, according to Vasquez, to have ambition enough to have no superfluity, as it is safe, according to the Gospel, to have no ambition so as to give alms from what is superfluous?'

'The answer would have to be,' he said, 'that both these ways are safe, according to the same Gospel; one, according to the Gospel in the most obvious and literal sense; the other, according to the same Gospel interpreted by Vasquez. That shows you how useful interpretation can be.

'But when the terms are so clear that they allow of no interpretation, then we employ the device of appealing to favourable circumstances, as you will see from this example. Popes have excommunicated religious who leave off their habit, and yet our 24 Elders speak like this, p. 704: "On what occasions may a religious leave off his habit without incurring excommunication?" Several are quoted, among others the following: "If he leaves it off for a shameful cause, like going out to steal, or going incognito to places of sin, intending shortly to resume it." So it is obvious that the bulls do not mention such cases.'

I found that hard to believe, and I asked the Father to show it to me in the original; and I saw that the chapter in which these words occur is entitled *Practice according to the School of the Society of Jesus. Praxis ex Societatis Jesu schola*, and I read these words: '*If he leaves off his habit in order to steal, or commit fornication in secret.*' And he showed me the same thing in Diana, in these terms: '*In order to go incognito to a brothel.*'

'And how is it, Father, that they have been exempted from excommunication on such occasions?'

'Do you not understand?' he said. 'Do you not see what a scandal it would be to catch a religious in such conditions wearing his religious habit? And have you never heard,' he went on, 'how they answered the first Bull *Contra sollicitantes*? and how our 24, in a chapter also about the *Practice of the School of our Society* explain the Bull of Pius V, *Contra Clericos etc.*?'

'I do not know what this is all about,' I said.

'Then you have not read much Escobar?' he said.

'I have only had him since yesterday, Father, and indeed I had a lot of trouble finding one. I do not know what has been happening lately to make everyone want him.'

'What I was telling you,' replied the Father, 'is on p. 117. Look at it when you get home; you will find there an excellent example of the way to interpret bulls favourably.'

I did in fact look at it that very evening; but I dare not quote it to you, because it is quite dreadful.

The good Father continued thus:

'Now you understand how favourable circumstances can be used. But sometimes there are such precise ones that contradiction cannot be reconciled by these means, and so, in such cases, you might well believe that there are contradictions. For example, three popes have decided that those religious who are obliged by a special vow to a life of Lenten observance are not dispensed from it even if they become bishops; and yet Diana says that "notwithstanding their decision, they are dispensed."'

'And how does he reconcile that?' I asked.

'By the most subtle of all the new methods,' answered the Father, 'and by the greatest refinement of probability. I will explain it to you. The fact is, as you saw the other day, that both the affirmative and the negative of most opinions have some probability, in the view of our doctors, and enough to be followed with a safe conscience. It is not that the pro and the con are both right together in the same sense, that is impossible, but just that they are probable and consequently safe.

'On this principle our good friend Diana speaks thus in part 5, tr. xiii, r. 39: "I reply to the decision of these three popes, which runs counter to my own opinion, that they have spoken as they have by adhering to the affirmative, which is indeed probable, even in my view; but it does not follow from that that the negative does not also have some probability." And in the same treatise, r. 65, on another subject where he also disagrees with a pope, he speaks thus: "that the pope said this as head of the Church, I admit. But he did it only to the extent of the sphere of probability of his opinion." Now you can see that this is not offensive to papal opinions; they would never stand for that in Rome, where Diana enjoys so much credit. For he does not say that what popes have decided is not probable, but leaving their opinion with its full sphere of probability, he none the less says that the contrary is also probable.'

'That is very respectful of him,' I said.

'And it is more subtle,' he added, 'than what Father Bauny replied when his books had been censured in Rome. For writing against Monsieur Hallier, who was at that time persecuting him dreadfully, he let out the phrase: "What has the censure of Rome in common with that of France?" You can see clearly enough from all this that whether by interpreting terms, observing favourable circumstances, or finally by the double probability of pro and con, these alleged contradictions which previously amazed you can always be reconciled without ever

offending the decisions of Scripture, councils or popes, as you see.'

'Oh reverend Father,' I said, 'how lucky the Church is to have you for her defenders! How useful these probabilities are! I did not know why you took such pains to establish the fact that one doctor, "if he is grave", can make an opinion probable; that the contrary may be so too; and that one can then choose pro and con as one likes best, even if one does not believe it to be true, and with such serenity of conscience that any confessor refusing to grant absolution on the strength of these casuists would be in a state of damnation. From this I gather that a single casuist can make new moral rules as he pleases, and dispose at his whim of whatever concerns the conduct of the Church.'

'What you say,' said the Father, 'needs to be somewhat modified. Note the following. This is our method, in which you will see the progress of a new opinion from birth to maturity.

'First of all, the *grave* doctor who has thought it up displays it in public, and casts it forth like a seed to take root. It is still weak at this stage, but time must gradually ripen it, and that is why Diana, who has introduced more than one, says in one place: "I advance this opinion; but because it is new, I leave it to be ripened by time, *relinquo tempori maturandam.*" Thus in a few years one sees it imperceptibly gather strength, and after some considerable time, it becomes authorized by the Church's tacit approval, according to Father Bauny's great principle: "Once an opinion has been advanced by casuists, and not opposed by the Church, this is evidence of her approval." And it is indeed by this principle that he authorizes one of his own opinions in his *Treatise* 6, p. 312.'

'You mean to say, Father,' I said, 'that the Church, on this showing, approves all the abuses she has to endure, and all the errors in the books which she does not censure?'

'Have it out,' he said, 'with Father Bauny. I am just telling

you, and you challenge me. One must never dispute on a point of fact. Well, as I was saying, when time has thus ripened an opinion, then it is absolutely probable and safe. That is why the learned Caramuel, in the letter addressing to Diana his *Fundamental Theology*, says that this great Diana "has made many opinions probable which were not so before, *quae antea non erant*: and that it is therefore no longer a sin to follow them, whereas it was a sin before: *jam non peccant licet ante peccaverint.*"'

'To be sure, Father,' I said, 'there is a lot of profit to be derived from your doctors. Why, when two people do the same thing, the one who does not know their doctrine is sinning, and the one who does know it is not! So it at once instructs and justifies. God's law made transgressors, according to St Paul; and this one makes almost everyone innocent. I beg you, Father, to tell me all about it; I will not leave you until you have told me the chief principles established by your casuists.'

'Alas,' the Father said, 'our chief aim would have been to establish no other principles save those of the Gospel in all their rigour; and it is evident enough from the rules governing our own behaviour that if we tolerate such laxity in others, it is out of kindness rather than design. We are forced to. Men today are so corrupt that since we cannot make them come to us, we must go to them. Otherwise they would forsake us; they would do worse, they would give way to utter abandon. And it is to keep hold of them that our casuists have considered the vices to which people of every condition are most inclined, so as to establish such lenient principles (without offending against the truth, however) that you would be very hard to please if you did not find them satisfactory; for the basic policy which our Society has adopted for the good of religion is not to rebuff anyone lest people fall into despair.

'So we have principles for all kinds of persons, for holders of benefices, for priests, for religious, for the gentry, for servants, for the rich, for those in trade, for those in misfortune, for

those in need, for women who are pious, for women who are not, for married people, for dissolute people. In brief, nothing has escaped their foresight.'

'In other words,' I said, 'there are principles for the clergy, the nobility and the Third Estate; I cannot wait to hear them.'

'Let us begin,' said the Father, 'with the holders of benefices. You know what traffic there is in benefices nowadays and that, if we had to go by what St Thomas and the ancient authors have written, there would be plenty of simonists in the Church. And that is what made it so necessary that our Fathers should mitigate things with their prudence, as you will learn from these words of Valentia, one of Escobar's four beasts. It forms the conclusion of a long argument, where he gives several expedients, of which the best, in my view, is this. It is on p. 2042 of vol. III: "If anyone gives a temporal good for a spiritual good," (that is money for a benefice) "and gives money as the price of a benefice, this is obviously simony. But if the money is given as a motive inducing the incumbent to resign the benefice, *non tanquam pretium beneficii, sed tanquam motivum ad resignandum*, it is not simony, even if the person resigning considers and expects the money as his main object." Tannerus, another member of our Society, says the same thing in his vol. III, p. 1519, although he admits: "that St Thomas is against this, in that he absolutely insists that it is always simony to give a spiritual for a temporal good, if the temporal good is its object." By this means we prevent countless acts of simony. For who in giving money for a benefice would be so wicked as to refuse to form the intention of giving it as a *motive* to induce the incumbent to resign, instead of giving it as the *price* of the benefice? No one is abandoned by God to that extent.'

'I agree,' I said, 'that everyone has sufficient grace to strike such a bargain.'

'That is certain,' replied the Father.

'That is how we have made things easier for holders of benefices. As for priests, we have several principles of some

benefit to them. For instance, this one from our 24, p. 143: "May a priest who has accepted money to say a mass, accept fresh money for the same mass? Yes, says Filiutius, by applying that part of the sacrifice which pertains to him as a priest to the person offering fresh payment, provided that he does not receive as much for it as for a whole mass, but only for a part, say a third of a mass."'

'To be sure, Father, this is one of the occasions when pro and con are very probable. For what you tell me cannot fail to be so, after the authority of Filiutius and Escobar. But leaving it in the sphere of probability, it seems to me that it would be easy to say the opposite as well and support it by these arguments. When the Church permits priests who are poor to accept money for their masses, because it is only right that those who serve the altar should live by the altar, she does not on that account mean them to exchange the sacrifice for money, still less to deprive themselves of all the grace which they should be the first to derive from it. And I would go so far as to say that, according to St Paul, "priests are obliged to offer the sacrifice first of all for themselves and then for the people," and they are certainly allowed to associate others with the fruit of the sacrifice, but not themselves to renounce voluntarily the whole fruit of the sacrifice, and give it to someone else for a third of the mass-fee, that is four or five *sous*. Indeed, Father, I would only have to be a grave authority to make this opinion probable.'

'You would not have much trouble,' he said; 'it is obviously so. The difficulty was to find probability on the opposite side, and that is a job for great men only. Father Bauny excels at it. It is a pleasure to see this learned casuist going into the two sides of the same question, again concerning priests, and being subtle and ingenious enough to find right on both sides.'

'In one place he says, in his *Treatise* 10, p. 474: "It cannot be made obligatory by law for priests with cure of souls to say mass every day, because such a law would indubitably, *haud*

dubie, expose them to the danger of sometimes saying it in a state of mortal sin." Yet in the same treatise, p. 441, he says: "that priests who have accepted money to say mass every day, must say it every day; and that it is no excuse to say that they are not always sufficiently well prepared to say it, because an act of contrition can always be made; and if they fail to do so, it is their fault, and not that of the person who makes them say the mass." And to remove the greatest difficulties which might prevent them from saying mass, he thus resolves the question in the same treatise, q. 32, p. 457: "Can a priest say mass on the same day that he has committed a mortal sin, of the most criminal kind, provided he goes to confession first? No, says Villalobos, because of his impurity. But Sancius says he can, and without any sin, and I consider that his opinion is safe and should be followed in practice; *et tuta et sequenda in praxi*."'

'What, Father!' I said, 'this opinion should be followed in practice? You mean that a priest guilty of such misconduct would dare to approach the altar that same day just because Father Bauny says so? Should he not defer to the ancient laws of the Church which permanently excluded from the sacrifice priests who had committed sins of that sort, rather than to the modern opinions of the casuists, who admit them to it on the very day they have fallen?'

'You have no memory,' said the Father; 'did I not tell you last time that "in matters of morality one should not follow the ancient Fathers but the modern casuists", according to our Fathers Cellot and Reginaldus?'

'I remember that very well,' I answered, 'but there is more at stake here. For there are the laws of the Church to consider.'

'You are right,' he said, 'but of course you do not yet know this fine principle of our Fathers: "That the laws of the Church lose their force when they are no longer observed, *cum iam desuetudine abierunt*," as Filiutius says, vol. II, tr. 25, n. 33. We can see better than those of old the present needs of the Church.

If we were so strict about excluding priests from the altar, you will readily understand that there would not be so great a number of masses. Now the multitude of masses brings so much glory to God and so much benefit to souls that I venture to say, with our Father Cellot in his book on the *Hierarchy*, p. 611 (Rouen impression), that there would not be too many priests "even if not only all men and women, if that were possible, but also inanimate bodies, and even brute beasts, *bruta animalia*, were turned into priests to celebrate mass."'

I was so astounded by such a bizarre fantasy that I could not speak, and he went on like this:

'But that is enough about priests; I should go on too long; let us come on to religious. As their greatest difficulty lies in the obedience they owe to their superiors, listen to the alleviations introduced by our Fathers. Here is Castrus Palaus, of our Society, *Moral Works*, part 1, disp. 2, p. 6: "It is incontrovertible, *non est controversia*, that a religious who has a probable opinion in his favour is not obliged to obey his superior although the opinion of the superior is the more probable. For in that case the religious is allowed to embrace the opinion most agreeable to himself, *quae sibi gratior fuerit*, as Sanchez says. And although the superior's order may be just, that does not oblige you to obey; for it is not just on every point and in every way, *non undequaque juste praecipit*, but only probably so; and so you are only probably obliged to obey, and you are probably released from that obligation; *probabiliter obligatus, et probabiliter deobligatus*."'

'My word, Father,' I said, 'no one could exaggerate the value of so fine a fruit of double probability!'

'It is widely used,' he said; 'but let us be brief. I will only add this passage from our celebrated Molina in favour of religious expelled from their houses for misconduct. Our Father Escobar quotes it on p. 705 in these terms: "Molina affirms that a religious expelled from his monastery is not obliged to amend

his ways in order to return, and is no longer bound by his vow of obedience."'

'Well, Father,' I said, 'that looks after the comfort of churchmen. I can see that your casuists have treated them very favourably. They have gone about it as if acting on their own behalf. I am very much afraid that people of other classes may not come off so well. Everyone ought to have looked after himself.'

'They would not have done better themselves,' the Father replied. 'All have been treated with equal charity, from the greatest to the smallest. And you oblige me to demonstrate this by telling you our principles concerning servants.

'We have considered how hard it is for them, when they are men of conscience, to serve dissolute masters. For if they do not perform all the commissions on which they are employed, they lose their livelihood, and if they do obey, they have scruples about it. It is in order to relieve these scruples that our 24 Fathers, p. 770, have indicated the services which they can render with a safe conscience. Here are some of them: "To carry letters and presents; to open doors and windows; to help their master climb up to a window; to hold the ladder while he climbs; all that is permissible and morally indifferent. It is true that when it comes to holding the ladder they must be threatened more than usual in case of failure to do so. For it is an offence against the master of a house to enter through a window."

'Do you see how judicious that is?'

'I expected no less,' I said, 'of a book compiled from 24 Jesuits.'

'But,' added the Father, 'our Father Bauny has also taught servants how to render such services to their masters innocently, by making them direct their intentions not towards the sins of which they are the accessories, but solely to the profit which accrues to them thereby. This is well explained in his *Compendium of Sins*, p. 710, of the first impression: "Confessors should

note," he says, "that absolution cannot be given to servants who perform dishonest commissions, if they consent to their masters' sins; but we must say the opposite if they do it for their own temporal benefit." And that is easy enough; for why should they insist on consenting to sins which bring them nothing but trouble?

'And the same Father Bauny has further established this great principle for the benefit of those who are dissatisfied with their wages. It comes in his *Compendium*, pp. 213 and 214 of the sixth edition: "If servants complain about their wages, can they increase them themselves by laying their hands on as much of their masters' property as they deem necessary to make the said wages equal to their toil? They can do so in certain circumstances, as when they are so poor when looking for a job that they are obliged to accept whatever is offered, while other servants of their kind earn more elsewhere."'

'That, Father,' I said, 'is just the passage in the Jean d'Alba case.'

'What Jean d'Alba?' said the Father. 'What do you mean?'

'What, Father! Do you not remember what happened in 1647? Where were you then?'

'I was teaching,' he said, 'cases of conscience in one of our colleges some distance from Paris.'

'I can see then, Father, that you do not know this story; I must tell it to you. I was in a place the other day where a certain trustworthy person was telling the tale. He told us that this Jean d'Alba, in service with your Fathers of the Collège de Clermont in the rue Saint-Jacques, was dissatisfied with his wages and stole something to make them up. Whereupon your Fathers had him thrown into gaol, accusing him of theft; and he came up for trial at the Châtelet on 6 April 1647, if I remember right. For he pointed out all these details, without which we should hardly have believed him. The unfortunate man, when interrogated, confessed that he had taken a few pewter plates from your Fathers; but that he had not on that

account stolen them, quoting as his justification this doctrine of Father Bauny, which he presented to the judges together with a document from one of your Fathers, under whom he had studied cases of conscience and who had taught him the same thing. Whereupon Monsieur de Montrouge, one of the most respected of that court, gave as his judgement: "that he did not consider that on the basis of the writings of these Fathers, containing an unlawful, and pernicious doctrine, contrary to all laws, natural, divine and human, capable of disrupting every family and authorizing any domestic theft, the accused should be acquitted. But he considered that the too faithful disciple should be whipped before the door of the college, at the hands of the common hangman, who should at the same time burn the writings of these Fathers dealing with larceny, and they should be forbidden ever again to teach such doctrines on pain of death."

'People were waiting to see the effect of this opinion, which was highly approved, when some incident occurred which caused the judgement of the case to be deferred. Meanwhile the prisoner disappeared, no one knows how, and no more was said of the business; so that Jean d'Alba got away and did not return the plate. That is what he told us, and he added that Monsieur de Montrouge's judgement is in the registers of the Châtelet for anyone to see. We much enjoyed the story.'

'What are you playing at?' said the Father. 'What does that all mean? I tell you about the principles of our casuists, and am just coming on to those concerning the gentry, when you interrupt me with irrelevant stories.'

'I only mentioned it by the way,' I said, 'and also to remind you of an important aspect of the subject, which I think you forgot when you established your doctrine of probability.'

'What!' said the Father; 'what could have been overlooked when so many able men have been over it?'

'It is this,' I said; 'you have certainly safeguarded those who follow your probable opinions with regard to God and their

conscience. For, from what you say, anyone is safe on that score if he follows a grave doctor. You have also given them safeguards as regards confessors; for you have obliged priests to absolve them on the basis of a probable opinion, on pain of mortal sin. But you have not safeguarded them as regards judges; so that they find themselves liable to the lash and the gallows if they follow your probabilities. That is a major omission.'

'You are right,' said the Father; 'I am obliged to you. But the fact is that we do not have as much power over magistrates as over confessors, who are obliged to refer to us for cases of conscience. For we are the sovereign judges there.'

'I understand that,' I said, 'but if on the one hand you are the judges of the confessors, are you not on the other the confessors of the judges? Your power is very extensive; oblige them, on pain of exclusion from the sacraments, to acquit criminals who have a probable opinion, so that it does not happen, to the great shame and scandal of posterity, that those whom you exculpate in theory are whipped and hanged in practice. Otherwise how would you get anyone to follow you?'

'We must think about it,' he said, 'that is something we must not overlook. I will put it up to our Father Provincial. All the same you can keep your advice for some other time, and not interrupt what I have to tell you about the principles we have established for the benefit of the gentry, and I will only tell you on condition that I have no more nonsense from you.'

That is all you are going to have today; for it takes more than one letter to pass on to you all that I have learned in a single conversation.

Meanwhile, I am, etc.

SEVENTH LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 25 April 1656

SIR,

After I had soothed the good Father, whose talk had been somewhat disturbed by my story of Jean d'Alba, he resumed on my undertaking to tell no more such stories, and described the principles of the casuists regarding the gentry something like this:

'You know,' he said, 'that the ruling passion with persons of this class is the point of honour, which drives them constantly to acts of violence which appear quite contrary to Christian piety; so that almost all of them would have to be excluded from our confessionals if our Fathers had not somewhat relaxed the strictness of our religion in order to adapt themselves to human weakness. But as they wanted to remain loyal to the Gospel out of duty to God, and to men and women of the world out of charity towards their neighbour, they needed all their wits to devise expedients which would so nicely adjust things as to allow men to preserve and redeem their honour by the means normally used in society without offending their conscience; in order to preserve at once two things so apparently incompatible as piety and honour.

'But the utility of this plan was only equalled by the difficulty of its execution. For I think you can see well enough how great and difficult an enterprise this was.'

'It astounds me,' I told him.

'It astounds you?' he answered. 'I can believe that; it would astound many other people too. Do you not know that on the one hand the law of the Gospel bids us: "not to render evil for evil, and to leave vengeance to God?" And that on the other the world's laws forbid us to suffer insults without personally seeking satisfaction, often by the death of our enemies? Have

you ever seen anything that looked so incompatible? And yet, when I tell you that our Fathers have reconciled these two things, you merely say that you are astounded.'

'I did not make myself sufficiently clear, Father. I would regard it as something impossible, did I not know, from what I have seen of your Fathers, that they can easily do what other men find impossible. That is what makes me believe that they have indeed found some way round it, which I admire without knowing, and which I beg you to declare to me.'

'Since you take it like that,' he said, 'I cannot refuse you. You should know then that this marvellous principle is our great method of *directing the intention*, which is so important in our morality that I might almost venture to compare it to the doctrine of probability. You have seen some of its features in passing, in certain principles I mentioned. For when I explained how servants can perform certain awkward commissions with a good conscience, did you not notice that it was only by deflecting their intention from the evil of which they are the accessories and applying it to the profit they get out of it? That is what *directing the intention* means. Similarly you saw that those who give money for benefices would be genuine simonists but for such a deflection. But I now want to show you this great method in all its lustre, on the subject of homicide, which it justifies in innumerable circumstances, so that you may judge from such effects all that it is capable of producing.'

'I see already,' I said, 'that this will make everything permissible, nothing will escape it.'

'You go from one extreme to another,' answered the Father, 'you must cure yourself of that fault. As evidence that we do not permit everything, note, for instance, that we never tolerate anyone having the formal intention of sinning just for the sake of sinning; and that if anyone insists on having no other end in evil-doing but evil itself, we break with him; that is diabolical; to that there is no exception whether of age, sex or rank. But when people are not in this unhappy state of mind, then we try

and put into practice our method of *directing the intention*, which consists in setting up as the purpose of one's action some lawful object. Not that we fail to deter men as far as we can from forbidden things, but when we cannot prevent the action, at least we purify the intention; and thus we correct the viciousness of the means by the purity of the end.

'That is how our Fathers have found a way to permit the acts of violence commonly practised in the defence of honour. For it is only a question of deflecting one's intention from the desire for vengeance, which is criminal, and applying it to the desire to defend one's honour, which according to our Fathers is lawful. And so it is that they fulfil all their duties to God and to men. For they content the world by permitting such actions; and they satisfy the Gospel by purifying intentions. That is something the ancients never knew; that is something you owe to our Fathers. Now do you understand?'

'Very well,' I said. 'You grant men the crude substance of things and give God this spiritual movement of the intention; and by this equitable allocation you unite human and divine laws. But Father, to tell you the truth, I am a little wary of your promises, and I feel doubtful whether your authors go as far as you.'

'You do me an injustice,' said the Father; 'I only put forward what I can prove, and by so many passages that you will be filled with wonder at their number, authority and arguments.

'To show you how our Fathers have united the precepts of the Gospel with those of the world by this direction of intention, listen to our Father Reginaldus, *On the Practice*, book 21, n. 62, p. 260: "It is forbidden for private individuals to take revenge. For in Romans XII St Paul says: Recompense to no man evil for evil; and Eccl. XXVIII: He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Apart from all that is said in the Gospel about pardoning offences, as in Matthew VI and XVIII."'

'To be sure, Father, if he says anything after that but what is in Scripture it will not be for want of knowing it. What then does he conclude?'

'As follows,' he said: '"From all these facts it is apparent that a soldier may forthwith pursue the man who has wounded him; not indeed with the intention of rendering evil for evil, but with that of preserving his honour: *Non ut malum pro malo reddat, sed ut conservet honorem.*"

'Do you see how careful they have been to forbid anyone having the intention of rendering evil for evil, because Scripture condemns it? They have never tolerated that. See Lessius, *On Justice*, book 2, ch. ix, d. 12, n. 79: "Someone who has been slapped may not have the intention of avenging himself; but he may very well have that of avoiding infamy, and to that end repel such an insult at once, even at the point of the sword: *etiam cum gladio*." Far from tolerating in anyone the intention of avenging himself on his enemies, our Fathers will not even admit that anyone should desire his enemy's death in a surge of hatred. See our Father Escobar, tr. 5, ex. 5, n. 145: "If your enemy is about to harm you, you must not desire his death in a surge of hatred, but you may well do so in order to avoid harm to yourself." For it is so legitimate with such an intention that our great Hurtado de Mendoza says: "That one may pray God to bring about the instant death of those about to persecute us, if there is no other way of avoiding it." This is in book 2, *On Hope*, vol. II, d. 15.3, sect. 4, para. 48.'

'Reverend Father,' I said, 'the Church has quite forgotten to include a petition for this intention among its prayers.'

'They have not put in everything,' he said, 'that we may ask of God. Besides it would not have been possible, for this opinion is more recent than the breviary; you are not much good at chronology. But on the same subject listen to this passage of our Father Gaspar Hurtado, *On the Substance of Sin*, diff. 9, quoted by Diana, p. 5, tr. 14, R. 99. He is one of Escobar's 24 Fathers: "The holder of a benefice may without any mortal

sin desire the death of someone who holds an annuity on his benefice; and a son may desire that of his father, and rejoice when it occurs, provided that it is only because of the benefit thereby accruing to him and not out of any personal hatred."'

'Oh Father!' I cried, 'what a splendid product of the direction of intention! I see that it covers a great deal. But all the same there are certain cases which it would still be hard to solve, though they are very necessary for the gentry.'

'Let us have a look at them,' said the Father.

'Show me,' I said, 'with all your direction of intention that it is lawful to fight a duel.'

'Our great Hurtado de Mendoza,' said the Father, 'will give you immediate satisfaction, in this passage quoted by Diana, p. 5, tr. 14, R. 99: "If a gentleman who is challenged to a duel is known not to be devout, and the sins which he is seen constantly committing without any scruples make it obvious that any refusal to duel will be motivated not by any fear of God but by cowardice; and so that it is said of him that he has the heart of a chicken and not a man, *gallina et non vir*, to preserve his honour he may be at the spot assigned, not, it is true, with the express intention of fighting a duel, but merely with that of self-defence if his challenger comes there to attack him unjustly. And in itself his action will be quite indifferent, for what harm can there be in going to a field, walking about waiting for someone and defending oneself if attacked? And so he is not sinning in any way, since it is by no means accepting a duel if the intention is directed to other circumstances. For acceptance of the duel consists in the express intention of fighting, which this man does not have."'

'You have not kept your word, Father. That is not really permitting the duel. On the contrary he avoids saying that it is one, in order to make it lawful, so sure is he that it is forbidden.'

'Ah ha!' said the Father, 'you are beginning to get there; I am delighted. All the same I might say that in this he is per-

mitting everything requested by those who fight duels. But since I must give you a fair answer, our Father Layman will do it for me, by permitting duelling in direct terms, provided that one's intention is directed towards accepting it solely in order to preserve one's honour and fortune. It is in book 3, pt. 3, ch. iii, nn. 2 and 3: "If a soldier in the army, or a gentleman at court, finds himself liable to lose honour or fortune by not accepting a duel, I cannot see that we can condemn anyone accepting one in self-defence." Petrus Hurtado says the same thing, as quoted by our famous Escobar in tr. 1, ex. 7, nn. 96 and 98, where he adds these words of Hurtado: "That one may fight a duel even to defend one's property if there is no other way of preserving it, because everyone has the right to defend his property, even by the death of his enemies."'

These passages made me wonder at seeing piety inspire the King to use his power to forbid and abolish duelling in the State, while it makes the Jesuits devote their subtlety to permitting and authorizing it in the Church. But the good Father was so well launched that it would have been unfair to stop him, so he went on as follows:

'Finally Sanchez – just look at the sort of men I am quoting – goes further. For he does not merely permit people to accept, but even to challenge to a duel, if the intention is properly directed. And our Escobar follows him in this in the same place, n. 97.'

'Father,' I said, 'I give him up if this is so; but I will never believe he wrote it unless I see it.'

'Read it for yourself then,' said he.

And indeed I read these words in Sanchez's *Moral Theology*, book 2, ch. xxxix, n. 7: 'It is quite reasonable to say that someone may fight a duel to save his life, his honour or some considerable amount of property, when it is established that an attempt is being made to rob him of these by lawsuits and chicanery, and that this is the only way to preserve them. And Navarrus very rightly says that in such an event it is lawful to

accept or challenge to a duel: *licet acceptare et offerre duellum.* And also that one may kill one's enemy by stealth. And even on such occasions one must not have recourse to a duel if one can kill one's man by stealth, and thus get out of it. For by this means one will at once avoid risking one's life in a fight and taking part in the sin which one's enemy would commit by duelling.'

'That is a pious ambush, Father,' I said; 'but, however pious, it remains an ambush, since it makes it lawful to kill one's enemy treacherously.'

'Did I ever say,' replied the Father, 'that one may kill anyone treacherously? Heaven preserve me! I tell you that one may kill by stealth, and from that you conclude that one may kill treacherously, as if it were the same thing. Find out from Escobar, tr. 6, ex. 4, n. 26, what killing treacherously means; then you can talk. "We call killing treacherously when one kills someone who is quite unsuspecting. And that is why anyone who kills his enemy is not said to kill him treacherously, even if it is from behind or in an ambush: *licet per insidias, aut a tergo percutiat.*" And in the same treatise, n. 56: "Anyone who kills his enemy after being reconciled with him and promising to make no more attempts on his life is not absolutely said to kill him treacherously, unless they had enjoyed intimate friendship: *arctior amicitia.*"

'You see from this that you do not even know what the terms signify, and yet you talk like a doctor of divinity.'

'I admit,' I said, 'that this is new to me; and from this definition I learn that perhaps no one has ever killed anyone else treacherously. For people seldom think of murdering anyone but their enemies; however that may be, according to Sanchez, one may have no qualms in killing, I will not say treacherously again, but merely from behind or in an ambush, some slanderer who is suing us?'

'Yes,' said the Father, 'but provided that the intention is properly directed; you keep forgetting the main thing. This is

what Molina maintains too, vol. IV, tr. 3, disp. 12. And even, according to our learned Reginaldus, book 21, ch. v, n. 57: "One may also kill any false witnesses whom he calls against us." And finally, according to our great and celebrated Fathers Tannerus and Emmanuel Sa, one may likewise kill false witnesses and the judge too, if he is in collusion with them. Here are his words, tr. 3, disp. 4, q. 8, n. 83: "Sotus and Lessius say that it is not lawful to kill the false witnesses and the judge who are conspiring to bring about the death of an innocent man, but Emmanuel Sa and other authors are right to refuse approval to this view, at least as regards conscience." And he further confirms in the same place that one may kill both judge and witnesses.'

'Father,' I said, 'I now pretty well understand your principle of directing the intention, but I should also like to understand its consequences, and all the cases in which this method enables us to kill. Let us then go back over those you have told me, for fear of misunderstanding, since ambiguity here could be dangerous. One must kill only in the right conditions and following a good probable opinion. Then you assured me that if one directs one's intention properly, one may, according to your Fathers, in preservation of honour, or even property, accept a duel, sometimes challenge to one, kill a false accuser by stealth, and his witnesses with him, and even the corrupt judge who favours them; and you also told me that anyone who has been slapped may, without avenging himself, seek redress at the point of the sword. But, Father, you have not told me to what extent.'

'You can hardly go wrong,' said the Father; 'for you may go as far as killing him. That is well proved by our learned Henriquez, book 14, ch. x, n. 3, and some of our other Fathers quoted by Escobar, tr. 1, ex. 7, n. 48, as follows: "You may kill a person who has slapped you, even if he runs away, provided that you avoid doing so out of hatred or vengeance, thus giving no occasion for these excessive murders so harmful

to the state. The reason is that one may run after one's honour, as one does after stolen goods. For although your honour is not in the hands of your enemy, like belongings he might have stolen, yet it may be recovered in the same way, by showing signs of dignity and authority, and thus acquiring public esteem. And is it not in fact true that anyone who has been slapped is reputed dishonoured until he has killed his enemy?"'

That seemed so horrible to me that I could hardly contain myself; but in order to learn the rest I let him continue thus:

'One may even, to forestall a slap, kill the person intending to give it, if there is no other way of avoiding it. That is common ground among our Fathers. For example, Azorius, *Moral Inst.*, pt. 3, p. 105 (he is another of the 24 Elders): "Is it lawful for a man of honour to kill someone who intends to slap him or hit him with a stick? Some say not, and their reason is that the life of our neighbour is more precious than our honour; and moreover that it is cruel to kill a man merely to avoid a slap. But others say that it is lawful; and I certainly find that probable, if there is no other means of avoiding it. Otherwise the honour of the innocent would be continually exposed to the malice of the insolent." Our great Filiutius likewise, vol. 11, tr. 29, ch. iii, n. 50, and Father Héreau, in his writings on homicide, Hurtado de Mendoza, in 2, 2, disp. 170, sect. 16, para. 137; and Becan, *Summa*, vol. 1, q. 64, *On Homicide*, and our Fathers Flahaut and Le Court, in their writings which the University, in its third application, quoted at length in order to decry them, but without success, and Escobar in the same place, n. 48, all say the same thing. In short this is so generally maintained that Lessius, book 2, ch. ix, d. 12, n. 77, speaks of it as something authorized by universal consensus of all casuists. "It is lawful," he says, "according to the consensus of all casuists, *ex sententia omnium*, to kill someone who intends to slap you or hit you with a stick, when this cannot be avoided in any other way." Do you want any more?'

I thanked him, for I had heard more than enough. But to

see how far so damnable a doctrine might go, I said to him:

'But, Father, is it not lawful to kill for rather less? Could one not so direct one's intention as to be able to kill for having been called a liar?'

'Yes,' said the Father, 'and according to our Father Baldelle, book 3, disp. 24, n. 24, quoted by Escobar in the same place, n. 49, "it is lawful to kill someone who says you have told a lie, if there is no other way of silencing him." And similarly one may kill for defamation, according to our Fathers. For Lessius, whom Father Héreau among others follows word for word, says, in the place already quoted: "If you try to ruin my reputation by slandering me in front of honourable people, and I can only avoid it by killing you, may I do so? Yes, according to modern authors, and even though the charge you are spreading is true, yet secret, so that you cannot reveal it in the normal course of justice. And here is the proof. If you try to rob me of my honour by slapping me, I may prevent it by force of arms; therefore the same defence is lawful when you try to inflict the same injury with your tongue. Moreover one may prevent insults: therefore one may prevent defamation. In short, honour is dearer than life. Now, one may kill to defend one's life: therefore one may kill to defend one's honour."

'These are formal arguments. This is not just talk, it is proof. Finally our great Lessius shows in the same place, n. 78, that one may kill even for a mere gesture, or sign of contempt. "Our honour may," he says, "be attacked or lost in several ways, against which it seems quite right to defend oneself; as when someone intends to hit us with a stick, or slap us, or insult us by word or sign: *sive per signa*."'

'Oh Father,' I said, 'one could not wish for more in defence of honour; but life is very vulnerable if one may kill people with a good conscience just for defamatory remarks or rude gestures.'

'That is true,' he said; 'but as our Fathers are very circumspect, they have found it expedient to forbid the practice of

this doctrine in certain cases, as in that of mere defamation. For they say at least "that it should hardly be put into practice: *practice vix probari potest.*" And that is not without reason; this is why.'

'I know very well,' I said, 'it is because the law of God forbids us to kill.'

'That is not how they take it,' said the Father. 'They find it lawful in conscience, and just regarding the truth in itself.'

'Why do they forbid it, then?'

'Listen,' he said. 'It is because any state would become depopulated in no time if all the slanderers in it were killed. You will learn this from our Reginaldus, book 21, n. 63, p. 260: "Although the opinion that one may kill for a defamatory remark is theoretically not without probability, in practice the contrary course must be followed. For one must always avoid harming the state in the way in which one defends oneself. Now it is obvious that by killing people like this too great a number of murders would be committed." Lessius speaks likewise in the place already quoted: "One must be careful lest recourse to this principle prove harmful to the state. For in that case it must not be allowed: *tunc enim non est permittendum.*"'

'What Father! Do we then have here only a political and not a religious prohibition? Few people will be deterred by that, especially in the heat of anger. For it might be quite probable that one is doing the state no harm by ridding it of a wicked man.'

'So,' he said, 'our Father Filiutius adds another very important reason, tr. 29, ch. iii, n. 51: "One would in fact be punished by the law if one killed people for such a cause."'

'I told you, you know, Father, that you would never get anywhere as long as you did not have the judges on your side.'

'Judges,' said the Father, 'who do not delve into consciences, judge only from the externals of an action, whereas we look mainly at the intention. And that is why our principles are sometimes slightly different from theirs.'

'However that may be, Father, it is a perfectly fair conclusion from yours that one may kill slanderers with safety of conscience, provided one's person is safe too. But, Father, after making such excellent provision for honour, have you done nothing for property? I know that is less important, but no matter. It seems to me quite possible to direct one's intention to kill in order to preserve it.'

'Yes,' said the Father, 'and I have already touched on something which may have given you this opening. All our casuists agree on that, and it is even lawful "although one no longer fears any violence from those who are removing our property; as when they run away." Azorius, of our Society, proves this, pt. 3, book 2, ch. i, q. 20.'

'But, Father, how much must the thing be worth to bring us to such a pass?'

'According to Reginaldus, book 21, ch. v, n. 66, and Tannerus, in vol. III, disp. 4, q. 8, d. 4, n. 68: "The thing must be very valuable in the judgement of a prudent man." And Layman and Filiutius speak in similar terms.'

'That does not mean anything, Father; where is one to find a prudent man to estimate this value, when they are so hard to come by? Why do they not fix the sum exactly?'

'What!' said the Father, 'do you think it was so easy to compare the life of a man, and a Christian, with money? This is where I will make you realize the necessity for our casuists. Look all through the ancient Fathers to see for what sum of money it is lawful to kill a man. What will they tell you but: "Thou shalt not kill: *Non occides.*"'

'Then who did dare to fix this sum?' I replied.

'None other,' he said, 'than our great and incomparable Molina, the glory of our Society, who in his inimitable wisdom put it at "six or seven ducats", for which sum he affirms that "it is lawful to kill, even though the thief runs away." It is in his vol. IV, tr. 3, disp. 16, d. 6. And he says, moreover, in the same place: "that he would never dare find anyone guilty of sin for

killing a man who tried to take from him something worth one crown or less: *unius aurei, vel minoris adhuc valoris.*" Which led Escobar to lay down this general rule, n. 44: "that it is in order to kill someone for the value of a crown, according to Molina."'

'Oh Father! How could Molina have been so enlightened as to determine something of such importance, with no help from Scripture, the councils or the Fathers? I can see that he enjoyed special illumination, far removed from that of St Augustine, on homicide as well as on grace. Now I am quite expert on this point, and I fully realize that churchmen are the only people whose honour or property can be offended without their killing those who offend them.'

'What do you mean?' replied the Father. 'Would it be reasonable in your view that those who ought to be most highly respected should be the only ones exposed to the insolence of the wicked? Our Fathers have forestalled such a disorder, for Tannerus, vol. II, d. 4, q. 8, d. 4, n. 76, says: "Ecclesiastics, and even religious, are permitted to kill in defence not only of their life but also their property, or that of their community." Molina, quoted by Escobar, n. 43; Becan in 2.2, vol. II, q. 7, *On Homicide*, concl. 2, n. 5; Reginaldus, book 21, ch. v, n. 68; Layman, book 3, tr. 3, pt. 3, ch. iii, n. 4; Lessius, book 2, ch. ii, d. 11, n. 72, and others all use the same words.

'Indeed, according to our famous Father L'Amy, priests and religious are even permitted to forestall those trying to blacken them by defamation by killing them in order to prevent it. But always provided that the intention is properly directed. Here are his words, vol. v, disp. 36, n. 118: "An ecclesiastic, or a religious, is permitted to kill a slanderer who threatens to publish scandalous charges about his community, or himself, when there is no other means of preventing it, as when he is about to spread his slanders abroad unless killed promptly. For in that case, as this religious would be allowed to kill someone who tried to take his life, so he is also permitted to kill someone

who tries to take away his honour, or that of his community, in the same way as seculars are."'

'I did not know that,' I said, 'and simply believed the contrary, without thinking about it, because I had heard that the Church has such a loathing of blood that she does not even permit ecclesiastical judges to be present at criminal trials.'

'Do not let that stop you,' he said; 'our Father L'Amy proves this doctrine very well, although with a gesture of humility very seemly in this great man he submits it to prudent readers. And Caramuel, our illustrious defender, quoting it in his *Fundamental Theology*, p. 543, thinks it so certain that he maintains "that the contrary is not probable", and he draws remarkable conclusions from it, like this one, which he calls "the conclusion to end all conclusions: *conclusionum conclusio*: That a priest not only may in certain circumstances kill a slanderer, but even that there are some when he is bound to do so: *etiam aliquando debet occidere*." He examines several new questions on this principle; for instance this one: MAY THE JESUITS KILL THE JANSENISTS?'

'Oh Father!' I exclaimed, 'that is a very surprising theological point! I reckon the Jansenists already as good as dead by Father L'Amy's doctrine.'

'That is where you have been caught,' said the Father. 'He concludes just the opposite from the same principle.'

'How so, Father?'

'Because,' he said, 'they do no harm to our reputation. Here are his words, nn. 1146 and 1147, pp. 547 and 548: "The Jansenists call the Jesuits Pelagians: may one kill them for that? No; inasmuch as the Jansenists no more dim the splendour of the Society than an owl that of the sun; on the contrary, they have enhanced it, although against their intentions: *occidi non possunt, quia nocere non potuerunt.*"'

'Just a minute, Father! Does the Jansenists' life then depend only on whether they harm your reputation? I do not think much of their safety if that is so. For if it becomes remotely

probable that they are harming you, it will be no trouble to kill them. You will provide a reasoned argument, and no more is needed, with a direction of the intention, to dispatch a man with a safe conscience. Oh how fortunate are those unwilling to suffer insults when they are versed in this doctrine! But how unfortunate are those who offend them! Thus, Father, one might just as well have people of no religion to deal with as those whose education includes this doctrine of direction. For, when all is said, the intention of the one who wounds does not bring any relief to the one wounded. He does not notice this secret direction, and only feels that of the blow inflicted on him. And I am not even sure if one would not feel less regret at seeing oneself brutally killed by people in a rage, than feeling oneself conscientiously stabbed by the devout.

'Quite honestly Father, I am a bit surprised at all this, and I do not like these questions of Father L'Amy and Caramuel at all.'

'Why?' said the Father. 'Are you a Jansenist?'

'I have another reason,' I said. 'The fact is that I write from time to time to one of my friends in the country about what I learn of your Fathers' precepts. And although all I do is simply to repeat and faithfully quote their words, I never know whether someone with odd ideas might not turn up and, imagining that this was doing you harm, draw some wicked conclusion from your principles.'

'Come now,' said the Father, 'no harm will come to you; I vouch for that. You should know that what our Fathers have printed themselves, and with the approval of our superiors, it is neither wrong nor dangerous to publish.'

So I am writing to you on the strength of the good Father's word; but I am always short of paper, not of texts. For there are so many others, and so extreme, that it would take several volumes to tell you everything.

I am, etc.

EIGHTH LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 28 May 1656

SIR,

You did not think that anyone would be curious to know who we are; yet there are people who are trying to guess; but they are wide of the mark. Some take me for a doctor of the Sorbonne, others ascribe my letters to four or five persons who, like me, are neither priests nor ecclesiastics. All these false suspicions make me realize that I have succeeded pretty well in my intention of being known only to you and the good Father who still puts up with my visits, and with whose conversation I still put up, though with much difficulty. But I am obliged to restrain myself, for he would never go on if he noticed how shocked I was, and I would thus be unable to keep my promise to let you know about their morality. I assure you that you should not underrate the effort I make. It is very hard to see the whole of Christian morality overturned by such strange aberrations without daring to say a word openly against it. But having endured so much in order to give you satisfaction, I think that in the end I shall burst out for my own sake, when he has nothing more to tell me. Meanwhile I shall control myself as best I can, for the less I speak the more he tells me. He told me so much last time that I shall have great difficulty in relating everything. You will see that the purse was treated with as scant respect as human life the time before. For no matter how he tones down his principles, those I have to tell you all tend in fact to favour corrupt judges, usurers, fraudulent bankrupts, fallen women and sorcerers, who are all somewhat generously dispensed from paying back what they earn in their respective professions. This is what I learned from the good Father in this talk.

'Since our conversations began,' he said, 'I have undertaken

to explain to you the principles of our authors regarding all walks of life. You have already seen those concerning the holders of benefices, priests, religious, servants and gentlemen; let us now run through the others, beginning with judges.

'I will first tell you one of the most important and helpful principles taught by our Fathers for their benefit. It is by our learned Castro Palao, one of the 24 Elders. Here are his words: "May a judge, on a point of law, judge according to a probable opinion, setting aside the most probable opinion? Yes, and even against his own opinion: *imo contra propriam opinionem.*" And that is what our Father Escobar quotes also in tr. 6, ex. 6, n. 45.'

'Oh Father,' I said, 'what an excellent start! The judges are much beholden to you; and I find it very odd that they oppose your probabilities, as we have sometimes remarked, since these are so much in their favour. For you give them by this means the same power over the fortunes of men as you have given yourselves over their consciences.'

'You see,' he said, 'that we are not prompted by self-interest; we have only cared about easing their consciences; and that is what our great Molina has so usefully worked on, in connexion with the gifts they receive. For in order to remove any scruples they might have about receiving these in certain circumstances, he took the trouble to enumerate all the cases where they may accept them with a good conscience, in the absence of any particular law forbidding it. This is in his vol. 1, tr. 2, disp. 88, n. 6. Here they are: "Judges may accept gifts from the parties when they are given either out of friendship, or gratitude for justice rendered, or in order to induce them to render it in the future, or to oblige them to take special pains over their business, or to commit them to making a prompt settlement." Our learned Escobar speaks of this again in tr. 6, ex. 6, n. 48, like this: "If there are several persons of whom none has more right than another to be given priority, does a judge sin if he takes something from one of them on the under-

standing, *ex pacto*, of giving him priority? Certainly not, according to Layman, for he is doing no harm to the others according to natural law when he grants to one, in consideration of his gift, what he could grant to whomsoever he pleased: and indeed, being under an equal obligation to all because all have equal rights, he becomes still more so to the one making the gift, which persuades him to give him preference over the others; and this preference seems capable of monetary assessment: *quae obligatio videtur pretio aestimabilis.*"'

'Reverend Father,' I said, 'I am surprised at this permission of which the chief magistrates of the kingdom are still unaware. For the First President has introduced an order into the Parlement* to prevent certain registrars from taking money for this sort of preferential treatment; which goes to show that he is far from thinking such a thing lawful for judges; and everyone has applauded a reform so beneficial to all parties.'

The good Father, surprised at my words, answered:

'Is that so? I did not know anything about it. Our opinion is only probable, the contrary is probable too.'

'To tell the truth, Father,' I said, 'it is thought that the First President has more than probably done right, and has by this means brought to a halt a public corruption which has been endured for too long.'

'I take the same view,' said the Father; 'but let us pass on and leave the judges.'

'You are right,' I said; 'besides, they are not sufficiently grateful for what you do for them.'

'It is not that,' said the Father, 'but because there is so much to say about everyone that we must be brief on each.

'Let us talk now of business men. You know that the biggest difficulty with them is turning them away from usury; so this

* The Parlement (of Paris) was the supreme judicial assembly, comprising various high courts of justice and a *Grande Chambre* whose duty it was to register royal edicts. Neither this body nor those in certain provincial towns, ever had the representative or legislative functions of the English Parliament.

is where our Fathers have taken special pains; for they detest this vice so much that Escobar says in tr. 3, ex. 5, n. 1: "that to say that usury is not a sin would be heresy." And our Father Bauny, in his *Compendium of Sins*, ch. xiv, fills up several pages with the penalties due to usurers. He declares them "infamous in life and unworthy of burial after death."'

'Oh, Father, I did not think he was so severe!'

'He is when he has to be,' he said, 'but this learned casuist, having observed that people are only attracted to usury by desire for gain, says in the same place: "It would be no small service to society if, safeguarding it against the evil effects of usury and at the same time of the sin that causes it, means were provided for deriving as much profit and more from one's money by putting it to some good and legitimate use as can be derived from usury."'

'No doubt, Father, there would be no usurers left after that.'

'And that is why,' he said, 'he has provided a *general method for all sorts of persons: gentlemen, presidents, counsellors etc.*, and one so easy that it consists simply in using certain words to be pronounced as one lends one's money; in consequence of which one may derive profit with no fear of it being usurious, as it unquestionably would be otherwise.'

'And what are these mysterious terms, Father?'

'Here they are,' he said, 'and in his very words; for you know that he wrote his book, the *Compendium of Sins*, in French "so that it should be understood by everybody", as he says in his preface: "Anyone who is asked for money shall answer in this way: I have no money to lend, but I do have some to put to honest and lawful profit. If you want the sum for which you ask in order to turn it to good account on a fifty-fifty basis, I may agree. It is of course true that since it is too difficult to agree about the profit, if you are willing to guarantee me a definite profit, together with security for my principal, we shall reach agreement more quickly, and I will let you have the money forthwith." Is that not a very easy way

to make money without sinning? And has Father Bauny not good cause to utter these words in concluding his method: "Here in my view is the means whereby numerous members of society, who through their usuries, extortions and unlawful contracts provoke God's righteous wrath against them, can save themselves while making handsome, honest and lawful profits?"'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'these are mighty words! I must confess that if I did not know them to come from a good source, I should take them for some of those magic words which have power to break a spell. No doubt they have some occult virtue for dispelling usury which I do not understand; for I always thought that this sin consisted of getting back more money than one lent.'

'You do not understand much about it,' he said. 'Usury, according to our Fathers, consists almost solely of the intention of taking this profit as usurious. And that is why our Father Escobar makes it possible to avoid usury by a mere shift of intention. It is in tr. 3, ex. 5, nn. 4, 33, 44: "It would be usury to make a profit from those to whom one lends if one demanded it as legally due; but if one demands it as due out of gratitude, it is not usury." And in n. 3: "It is not lawful to have the intention of profiting directly from money lent; but appealing to the goodwill of the person to whom one has lent, *media benevolentia*, is not usury."

'These are subtle methods, but one of the best in my opinion, for we have a choice, is that of the Mohatra contract.'

'The Mohatra contract, Father?'

'I can see,' he said, 'that you do not know what it is. Its name is the only strange thing about it. Escobar will explain it to you in tr. 3, ex. 3, n. 36: "The Mohatra contract is that whereby one buys goods dear and for credit, and simultaneously sells them to the same person cheap and for cash." That is what the Mohatra contract is; whereby you can see one receives a certain sum while continuing to owe more.'

'But Father, I do not think that anyone but Escobar has ever used these words; are there any other books which mention them?'

'How little you know about things!' said the Father. 'The latest book of moral theology printed this very year in Paris speaks of the Mohatra, and learnedly. It is entitled *Epilogue of the Summae*. It is "a compendium of all the compendia of theology, extracted from our Fathers Suarez, Sanchez, Lessius, Fagundez, Hurtado and other celebrated casuists", as the title says. You will see then on p. 54: "The Mohatra is when someone who needs twenty *pistoles* buys goods from a merchant for thirty *pistoles*, payable in one year, and at once sells them back to him for twenty *pistoles* in cash." That shows you clearly that the Mohatra is nothing unheard of.'

'Well, well, Father! Is this contract lawful?'

'Escobar,' replied the Father, 'says in the same place "that there are laws forbidding it under the most rigorous penalties."'

'So it is no use, Father?'

'Not at all,' he said, 'for Escobar, in the same place, gives expedients for making it lawful, "even though", he says, "the person buying and selling has the primary intention of making a profit, provided only that in selling he does not exceed the top price for such goods, and in buying back he does not go beyond the bottom price; and there is no prior agreement whether explicit or otherwise." But Lessius, *On Justice*, book 2, ch. xxi, d. 16, says: "even though there is prior agreement, there is no obligation to pay back the profit, except perhaps out of charity, should the person from whom it is demanded be indigent; and even then provided it can be paid without inconvenience: *si commode potest*." That is all there is to be said.'

'Indeed, Father, I think that any greater indulgence would be vicious.'

'Our Fathers,' he said, 'know so well when to stop! That shows you how useful the Mohatra is.

'I could tell you about a lot of other methods; but these will

do, and we must now discuss those who have fallen on hard times. Our Fathers have thought about giving them relief appropriate to the state to which they are reduced. For if they do not have the wherewithal to live decently and pay their debts too, they are allowed to secure part of it by declaring their bankruptcy to their creditors. This was decided by our Father Lessius and confirmed by Escobar in tr. 3, ex. 2, n. 163: "May a declared bankrupt in safety of conscience retain as much of his assets as is necessary to give his family a decent living, *ne indecore vivat*? With Lessius I maintain that he may; and even if he has acquired them by illegalities and crimes known to all, *de injustitia et notorio delicto*, although in that case he may not retain as much as otherwise."'

'How is that, Father? By what strange charity do you prefer to let these assets remain with someone who stole them by his extortions, so that he can enjoy a decent living, rather than allot them to his creditors, to whom they legitimately belong, and whom you thus reduce to poverty?'

'You cannot please everybody,' said the Father, 'and our Fathers have given particular thought to helping these unfortunates. And it is again for the benefit of the needy that our great Vasquez, quoted by Castro Palao, vol. 1, tr. 6, d. 6, p. 6, n. 12, says: "When one sees a thief determined and ready to rob a poor person, one may, in order to divert him, point out to him some particular wealthy person to rob instead." If you do not have Vasquez or Castro Palao, you will find the same thing in your Escobar; for, as you know, almost all he says comes from 24 of our most celebrated Fathers: it is in tr. 5, ex. 5, n. 120, in *the practice of our Society concerning charity towards our neighbour*.'

'This is truly great charity, Father, to save one from loss at the expense of another. But I think it ought to be thoroughgoing, and one would then be obliged in conscience to restore to the rich man the property which one had caused him to lose.'

'Not a bit of it,' he said; 'for you did not steal it yourself,

you only advised someone else to do so. Now listen to our Father Bauny's wise decision on a case which will surprise you much more, and where you might think there was a much greater obligation to make restitution. It is in ch. xiii of his *Compendium*. Here are his very words in the original: "Someone asks a soldier to assault his neighbour, or to burn down the barn of someone who has offended him; the question is whether, in the absence of the soldier, the other person who asked him to commit these outrages should make good from his own pocket the harm caused thereby. My opinion is that he should not. For no one is obliged to make restitution unless he has broken the law. Is he breaking it when he asks someone else for a favour? Whatever is requested of him, he is always free to grant or refuse it. Whichever way he inclines, it is his will that sways him; nothing obliges him to do it but kindness, sympathy and good nature. If then this soldier does not repair the damage he has done, the person at whose request he offended the innocent must not be compelled to do so."'

This passage all but broke off our interview; for I was on the point of bursting into laughter at the kindness and sympathy of a burner of barns, and the curious arguments which exempt from restitution the first and real author of arson, whom the judge would not exempt from the rope; but if I had not contained myself, the good Father would have been offended, for he was speaking seriously, and went on in the same strain:

'So many proofs should make you recognize how empty your objections are; meanwhile they are making us digress from the point. Let us come back to persons in distress, for whose relief our Fathers, among others Lessius, book 2, ch. xii, n. 12, assert: "that it is lawful to steal not only in case of extreme need, but also in case of grave, though not extreme, need." Escobar quotes him too in tr. 1, ex. 9, n. 29.'

'That is surprising, Father; there is hardly anyone who does not think his need is grave, and whom you therefore enable to steal with a safe conscience. And even if you limited this licence

solely to people who are genuinely in that state, it means opening the door to innumerable thefts, which judges would punish notwithstanding such grave need, and which you ought to repress all the more, bound as you are to uphold among men not merely justice but charity too, which is destroyed by this principle. For is it not in fact breaking the law and wronging your neighbour to bring about the loss of his property so that you can benefit from it yourself? That is what I had been taught until now.'

'That is not always true,' said the Father; 'for our great Molina taught us, vol. II, tr. 2, dis. 328, n. 8: "that the order of charity does not require us to deprive ourselves of profit in order thereby to save our neighbour from a similar loss." That is what he says to show what he had there undertaken to prove: "that we are not in conscience obliged to return property given to us by someone else in order to cheat his creditors of it." And Lessius, who maintains the same opinion, confirms it by this same principle in book 2, ch. xx, d. 19, n. 168.

'You have too little compassion for those who are badly off; our Fathers have been more charitable than that. They do justice to the poor as well as to the rich. I will go even further, they do justice even to sinners. For although they are very much opposed to those who commit crimes, yet they teach that property acquired by crimes can be legitimately retained. That is what Lessius says book 2, ch. x, d. 6, n. 46: "Money acquired by adultery is in truth won by illegitimate means, but its possession is nevertheless legitimate: *quamvis mulier illicite acquirat, licite retinet acquisita.*" And that is why the most celebrated of our Fathers formally decide that what a judge takes from one of the parties who is in the wrong in order to give an unjust decision in his favour, and what a soldier gets for killing a man, and what one earns by infamous crimes, may legitimately be retained. This is what Escobar extracts from our authors, and collects in tr. 3, ex. I, n. 23, where he lays down this general rule: "Goods acquired by shameful means, such as

murder, unjust sentences, dishonourable conduct etc. are legitimate possessions, and there is no obligation to make restitution." And again in tr. 5, ex. 5, n. 53: "One is free to dispose of what one receives for murders, unjust decrees, infamous sins etc., because it is lawful to possess it, and one acquires right of ownership and property over things so earned."'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'I had never heard of this method of acquisition; and I doubt whether the law sanctions it, or accepts murder, injustice and adultery as lawful titles.'

'I do not know,' said the Father, 'what the law books say about it; but I certainly do know that ours, which are the real rules of conscience, speak like me. It is true that they except one case, in which they make restitution obligatory. It is "when one has received money from those who have no power to dispose of their property, such as minors and religious". For our great Molina makes an exception of them in vol. 1, *On Justice*, tr. 2, disp. 94: "*Nisi mulier accepisset ab eo qui alienare non potest, ut a religioso, et filio familias.*" For they must then be given back their money. Escobar quotes this passage in tr. 1, ex. 8, n. 59, and confirms the same thing in tr. 3, ex. 1, n. 23.'

'But reverend Father,' I said, 'I see that religious are better treated in this than others.'

'Not at all,' said the Father; 'do we not do as much for all minors in general, with whom religious are numbered all their lives? It is right to except them. But with regard to all the others, there is no obligation to give them back what one gets from them for doing a wicked act. And Lessius amply proves it in book 2, *On Justice*, ch. xiv, d. 8, n. 52; "What is received for a criminal act is not subject to restitution by any natural law, because a wicked act can be assessed in monetary terms, by considering the profit accruing to the person causing it and the trouble taken by the one performing it; and that is why there is no obligation to repay what is received for committing one, of whatever kind it may be, homicide, unjust judgement,

filthy act, unless it has been received from those with no power of disposing of their property. You may say that someone who receives money for an evil deed is sinning, and so may neither take nor keep it. But I answer that once the thing has been done there is no longer any sin either in paying or accepting payment." Our great Filiutius goes still further with practical details. For he notes that "one is obliged in conscience to make different payments for actions of this sort according to the different classes of persons committing them, and some are worth more than others." He establishes this with solid argument in tr. 31, ch. ix, n. 231: "*To a woman fornicating in private a price is in conscience due, and with much more reason than to a prostitute. For the gift which a woman makes of her body in private is worth much more than that made by a public harlot; and there is no positive law which disqualifies her from reward. The same is to be said of the reward promised to a virgin, a married woman, a nun, or anyone else. For the same rule applies in all these cases.*"'

He then showed me in his authors things of this kind so infamous that I would never dare to quote them, and he would have been appalled by them himself (for he is a good fellow) but for the respect he feels for his Fathers, which makes him reverently accept everything emanating from them. I kept quiet, however, not so much with the intention of getting him to pursue the matter, as from surprise at seeing books written by religious so full of decisions at once so appalling, unjust and extravagant. He therefore freely pursued his argument, which he concluded thus:

'It is for that reason that our illustrious Molina (I think you will be satisfied after this) thus decides the question: "When one has accepted money to do some wicked act, is one obliged to give it back? We make a distinction," says this great man, "if one has not done the action for which the money was paid, it must be repaid; but if one has done it, there is no such obligation: *si non fecit hoc malum, tenetur restituere; secus, si fecit.*" This is quoted by Escobar in tr. 3, ex. 2, n. 138.

'There are some of our principles concerning restitution. You have learnt a lot of them today, now I want to see what you have got out of it. Tell me then: "If a judge has taken money from one of the parties to give a judgement in his favour, is he obliged to repay it?"'

'You have just told me he is not, Father.'

'I thought as much,' he said. 'Did I make this as a general statement? I told you that he is not obliged to repay if he has made the case go in favour of someone who was in the wrong. But when someone is in the right do you expect him also to pay for winning a case, when that is his lawful due? You have no reason to. Do you not understand that the judge is bound to render justice, and therefore cannot sell it; but he is not bound to render injustice, and so he can take money for it? So all our chief authors, like Molina, disp. 94 and 99; Reginaldus, book 10, nn. 184, 185 and 187; Filiutius tr. 31, nn. 220 and 228; Escobar, tr. 3, ex. 1, nn. 21 and 23; Lessius book 2, ch. xiv, d. 8, n. 52, all unanimously teach: "That a judge is certainly obliged to repay what he has accepted to render justice, unless it was given to him out of generosity; but he is never obliged to repay what he has accepted from someone in whose favour he has given an unjust judgement."'

I was dumbfounded by this fantastic decision; and while I was considering its pernicious consequences the Father was preparing another question for me, and said:

'Try again then and answer this one with more circumspection. I want to know now: "If a man is involved in fortune-telling is he obliged to repay money earned in that pursuit?"'

'Just as you like, reverend Father,' I said.

'What do you mean, as I like? You are really amazing! From the way you talk, it would look as if the truth depended on our will. I can see that you would never find this out by yourself. Look then at how Sanchez resolves this difficulty;-but it is Sanchez, of course. First he distinguishes in his *Summa*, book 2, ch. xxxviii, nn. 94, 95 and 96: "Whether this fortune-teller

has only used astrology and other natural means or has resorted to the black art." For he says: "that he is obliged to make restitution in one case and not in the other." Would you now please tell me which?'

'There is no difficulty in that,' I said.

'I see what you mean,' he replied. 'You think that he must make restitution when he has made use of diabolical assistance? But you do not understand at all; it is quite the contrary. Here is Sanchez's solution, in the same place: "If this fortune-teller has not taken care and trouble to know by diabolical means what could not otherwise be known, *si nullam operam opposuit ut arte diaboli id sciret*, he must make restitution; but if he has taken that trouble, he is not obliged to do so."'

'How does that come about, Father?'

'Do you not understand?' he said. 'It is because one really can tell fortunes by the black arts, whereas astrology is a false method.'

'But Father, if the devil does not answer the truth, for he is scarcely more reliable than astrology, by the same argument the fortune-teller will have to make restitution?'

'Not always,' he said. '"*Distinguo*," Sanchez says to that: "for if the fortune-teller is ignorant of the black arts, *si sit artis diabolicae ignarus*, he is obliged to make restitution; but if he is a clever sorcerer, and has done all he can to know the truth, he is not so obliged. For in that case the diligence of such a sorcerer can be assessed in monetary terms: *diligentia a mago apposita est pretio aestimabilis*."'

'That is very sensible, Father,' I said: 'for this is a way of getting sorcerers to become learned and expert in their art, in the hope of making legitimate profit, according to your principles, from serving the public loyally.'

'I think you are joking,' said the Father: 'that is not right. For if you spoke like that in some place where you were not known, there might be people who took your remarks amiss, and reproached you for making fun of religious matters.'

'I should easily defend myself from such a reproach, Father. For I believe that if they take the trouble to examine the real meaning of my words, they will not find one which does not indicate absolutely the opposite; and perhaps there will be an opportunity one day, in the course of our conversations, to demonstrate this more fully.'

'Ah ha!' said the Father, 'you are not laughing now.'

'I confess,' I said, 'that I should find any suspicion that I was trying to make fun of sacred things both hurtful and unjust.'

'I did not really mean it,' said the Father; 'but let us talk more seriously.'

'I am very ready to, if you wish, Father; that depends on you. But I confess that I am surprised to see that your Fathers have gone so far in taking care of all classes of person as to try even to regulate the legitimate profit of sorcerers.'

'Nobody could ever,' said the Father, 'write for too many people, or be too specific about cases, or too often repeat the same things in different books. You will see this from this passage by one of our gravest Fathers. You can judge from the fact that he is today our Father Provincial. It is by Fr. Cellot, in book 8, *On the Hierarchy*, ch. xvi, para. 2: "We know," he says, "of someone who was carrying a large sum of money to repay as his confessor had ordered; stopping at a bookshop on the way, and asking if there was anything new, *num quid novi*?, he was shown a new book of moral theology; idly turning the pages with nothing in view he happened upon his own case, and learned that he was not obliged to repay; so that, throwing off the burden of his scruples and remaining charged with the weight of his money, he went off home very much the lighter: *abjecta scrupuli sarcina, retento auri pondere, levior domum repetit.*"

'Well now! Tell me after that whether it is useful to know our precepts? Will you laugh at them now? Will you not rather, like Father Cellot, make this pious reflection on such a fortunate occurrence: "Such occurrences are, in God, the effect of his providence; in the guardian angel the effect of his

guidance; and in those to whom they happen the effect of their predestination. God from all eternity has willed that the golden chain of their salvation should depend on one particular author and not on a hundred others saying the same thing, because they do not happen to meet these. If this one had not written, that man would not have been saved. Let us then by the bowels of Christ beseech those who criticize the great number of our authors not to envy them the books which the eternal election of God and the blood of Christ have won them." These are the fine words in which this learned man so solidly proves the proposition he had put forward: "How useful it is that there should be a great number of authors writing on moral theology! *Quam utile sit de theologia morali multos scribere.*"'

'Father,' I said, 'I will put off to some other time any declaration of my views on that passage, and all I will say to you at the moment is that since your precepts are so useful, and it is so important to publish them, you must continue to instruct me in them. For I assure you that the person to whom I send them shows them to a lot of people. Not that we intend to make any other use of them, but we do really think it useful that people should be well informed about them.'

'So,' he said, 'you see that I do not conceal them; and to go on, I might as well talk to you next time about the pleasures and amenities which our Fathers allow in order to make salvation easy and to facilitate devotion, so that now you have seen what is relevant to particular classes, you might learn what is general to all, and thus need nothing more to complete your instruction.'

I am, etc.

I keep forgetting to tell you that there are Escobars of different impression. If you buy any, get those printed at Lyons, which have at the beginning a picture of a lamb standing on a book sealed with seven seals, or the Brussels ones of 1651. As these are the latest, they are better and fuller than those of the earlier Lyons editions of 1644 and 1646.

NINTH LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 3 July 1656

SIR,

I will spend no more time on courtesies than the good Father did last time I saw him. As soon as he caught sight of me he came up and said, looking at a book he was holding; 'If someone opened up Paradise to you would he not be rendering you the highest service imaginable? Would you not give millions in gold to have a key and go inside whenever you felt like it? There is no need to incur such vast expense; here is a key, indeed a hundred, at much lower cost.' I did not know whether the good Father was reading, or speaking on his own account, but he saved me the trouble by saying:

'These are the opening words of a fine book by Fr. Barry of our Society; for I never say anything on my own account.'

'What book, Father?' I said.

'Here is the title,' he said; '*Paradise opened to Philagie by means of a hundred easily performed devotions to the Mother of God.*'

'What, Father? each of these easy devotions is enough to open heaven's gates?'

'Yes,' he said; 'have a look at the words following those you have just heard: "The devotions to the Mother of God which you will find in this book are all so many keys to heaven, which will open up the whole of Paradise to you if you only perform them;" and that is why he says in the conclusion: "that he is happy if you perform just one of them."'

'Tell me one of the simpler ones then, Father.'

'They are all simple,' he replied: 'for instance: "salute the Holy Virgin when you come upon images of her; recite the little rosary of the ten pleasures of the Virgin; frequently utter the name of Mary; charge the angels with paying her our respects; desire to build more churches to her name than all the

monarchs of the world put together have done; greet her every morning and evening; say the *Ave Maria* every day in honour of the heart of Mary." And he says that with that one you can moreover be assured of winning the Virgin's heart.'

'But, Father,' I said, 'always provided you give her yours too?'

'That is not necessary,' he said, 'when you are too closely attached to the world. Listen: "An exchange of hearts would indeed be right; but yours is a little too dependent and sets too much store on creatures. Therefore I dare not invite you today to present the little slave you call your heart." And he is satisfied with the *Ave Maria* he had asked for. These devotions are on pp. 33, 59, 145, 156, 172, 258 and 420 of the first edition.'

'That is very convenient,' I said, 'and I do not think there will be any more people damned after that.'

'Alas!' said the Father, 'I can see that you have no idea how hard-hearted certain people can be! There are some who would never undertake to say daily the two words "good morning, good evening" because it demands some effort of memory. And so Fr. Barry has had to provide them with still easier practices "like wearing night and day beads round the arm in the form of a bracelet, or carrying a rosary or an image of the Virgin." These devotions are on pp. 14, 326 and 447. "And now say that I do not provide you with easy devotions for winning the favours of Mary," as Fr. Barry says on p. 106.'

'That, Father,' I said, 'is the ultimate in simplicity.'

'And,' he said, 'that is the best that could be done, and I think it will suffice; for only an utter wretch would refuse to take up one moment of his whole life to put beads round his arm, or a rosary in his pocket, thus making so certain of salvation that those who have tried have never been disappointed, whatever their way of life, although we advise people to lead a good life all the same. I will only quote you the example on p. 34 of a woman who daily performed the devotion of saluting images of the

Virgin, lived all her life in mortal sin, finally died in that state and was yet saved by the merits of this devotion.'

'How so?' I cried.

'Our Lord brought her back to life specially,' he said, 'so certain it is that no one can perish who performs one of these devotions.'

'Indeed, Father, I know that devotions to the Virgin are a powerful means of winning salvation, and that the least of them are very meritorious when motivated by faith and charity, as with the saints who have practised them. But if you convince those who use them without changing their evil life that they will be converted on their deathbed, or that God will restore them to life, it seems to me much more likely to keep sinners in their evil ways, lulled into a false security by such rash confidence, than to draw them away by a genuine conversion which only grace can effect.'

'"What does it matter,"' said the Father, '"how we enter Paradise so long as we enter?" as our celebrated Fr. Binet, our former Provincial, says on a similar subject in his excellent book *On the mark of Predestination*, no. 31, p. 130 of the 15th edition. "One way or another, what does it matter to us so long as we take the city of glory?" as Fr. Binet also says in the same place.'

'I confess,' I said, 'that it does not matter; but the question is whether one will enter.'

'The Virgin,' he said, 'answers for it. See the last lines of Fr. Barry's book: "If it should happen as you are dying that the enemy makes any claims on you, and the little commonwealth of your thoughts is disturbed, you have only to say that Mary answers for you and that it is to her that one must apply."'

'But, Father, if someone wanted to press that it would be awkward for you. For how do we know for sure that the Virgin answers for it?'

'Fr. Barry,' he said, 'answers for it on her behalf, p. 465: "As

for the profit and happiness that will come to you, I answer for it, and pledge myself on the good Mother's behalf."'

'But, Father, who will answer for Fr. Barry?'

'What!' said the Father. 'He belongs to our Company. Do you not know yet that our Society answers for all the books of our Fathers? That is something you must learn. It is right that you should know. There is an order in our Society forbidding booksellers of all kinds to print any book by our Fathers without the approval of the theologians of our Company and the permission of our superiors. It is a regulation made by Henri III, 10 May 1583, confirmed by Henri IV, 20 Dec. 1603 and Louis XIII, 14 Feb. 1612. Thus our whole body is responsible for the books of each of our Fathers. This is peculiar to our Company. And that is why no book comes from us which is not in the spirit of the Society. It was high time for you to know that.'

'Father,' I said, 'I am grateful, and only sorry not to have known it sooner. For this information makes one pay much more attention to your authors.'

'I would have told you before,' he said, 'if the occasion had offered; but profit by it in the future, and let us go on with our subject.

'I think that the means of winning salvation which I have revealed to you are easy, certain and numerous enough; but our Fathers would not wish people to stop at this first stage, where they only do what is strictly necessary for salvation. As they continually aspire to the greater glory of God they would like to bring men to a life of greater piety. And because worldly people are usually put off piety by the odd idea of it that they have been given, our Fathers have thought it extremely important to destroy this initial obstacle. That is where Fr. Le Moyne has won a high reputation by his book on *Easy Piety*, which he wrote with this in view. He there paints a perfectly charming picture of piety. Nobody has ever understood it like him. Judge from the first words of this work: "Virtue has

never revealed herself to anyone; no one has ever drawn her real likeness. It is by no means odd that there should be so little haste to scale her crag. She has been made out to be a tedious recluse; she has been associated with pain and toil; she has been represented as the enemy of sport and entertainment, which are the flower of joy and spice of life." This is what he says, p. 92.'

'But, Father, I do at least know that there have been great saints whose lives have been extremely austere.'

'That is true,' he said: 'but also "there have always been urbane saints and devout people who are civilized," according to this Father, p. 191; and you will see, p. 86, that the difference in their ways comes from differences of humours. Listen to him: "I do not deny that one can find devout people who are pale and of melancholy disposition, who love silence and retreat, and who have nothing but phlegm in their veins and earth on their faces. But there are enough others of a more cheerful disposition, who have an abundance of that sweet warm humour and kindly, pure blood which causes joy."'

'That shows you that a love of silence and retreat is not common to all the devout; and, as I was saying, that it is the result of their disposition more than of piety. Whereas those austere ways you mention are really characteristic of an uncouth and unsociable person. So you will find them listed among the absurd and brutish ways of a melancholic madman in the description given by Father Le Moyne in Book 7 of his *Moral Pictures*. Here are a few of the features: "He has no eyes for the beauties of art and nature. He would regard himself as bearing an uneasy burden if he had taken pleasure in anything. On feast-days he withdraws to the graveyard. He prefers to be in a tree-trunk or a cave than in a palace or on a throne. As for insults and injuries, he is as impervious as though he had the eyes and ears of a statue. Honour and glory are idols unknown to him, to which he offers up no incense. A beautiful woman is

a phantom to him, and these haughty and regal faces, those charming tyrants who everywhere make willing slaves without chains, have the same power over his eyes as the sun over those of an owl . . .'''

'Reverend Father, I assure you that if you had not told me that Fr. Le Moyne was the author of this portrait, I should have said that it was by some ungodly person deliberately trying to make the saints look ridiculous. For if this is not the picture of a man totally detached from the feelings which the Gospel bids us renounce, I confess that I am all at sea.'

'All right,' he said, 'see how little you know about these things. For these are "the features of a weak and uncouth spirit, lacking in the decent, natural affections he ought to have", as Fr. Le Moyne says at the end of this description. This is his method of "teaching Christian virtue and philosophy", according to his intention in writing the book, as declared in his foreword. And indeed it cannot be denied that this method of treating piety has a quite different appeal for people from that in force before our time.'

'There is no comparison,' I said, 'and I am beginning to hope that you will keep your promise.'

'You will see it much better in what follows,' he said; 'so far I have only talked to you about piety in general. But to show you in detail how painless our Fathers have made it, is it not comforting for the ambitious to learn that they can preserve their piety together with inordinate love of high honours?'

'Really Father! However excessively they may pursue them?'

'Yes,' he said: 'for it would never be anything but a venial sin unless one desired honours in order the more conveniently to offend God and the state. Now venial sins do not prevent you from being devout, since the greatest saints are not exempt from them. Listen then to Escobar, tr. 2, ex. 2, n. 17: "Ambition, which is an inordinate appetite for office and honours, is in itself a venial sin, but if one desires such honours in order to

harm the state, or to offend God with greater ease, such extraneous circumstances make it mortal."'

'That is a good start, Father.'

'And is it not also,' he said, 'being very kind to the avaricious to teach, like Escobar, tr. 5, ex. 5, n. 154: "I know that the rich are not sinning mortally when they do not give alms of their superfluity to relieve the grave distress of the poor: *scio in gravi pauperum necessitate divites non dando superflua non peccare mortaliter?*"'

'Indeed,' I said, 'if that is so I can see that I know next to nothing about sins.'

'As an even better illustration,' he said, 'do you not think that being conceited and self-satisfied about one's own work is one of the most dangerous sins? And will it not greatly surprise you to know that even if such conceit is unfounded, so far is it from being a sin that it is on the contrary a gift of God?'

'Is that possible, Father?'

'Yes,' he said, 'as we learn from our great Fr. Garasse in his French book entitled *Compendium of the principal truths of religion*, book 2, p. 419. "One result of commutative justice", he says, "is that all honest work should be rewarded with praise or satisfaction. . . . When clever people produce some excellent work, they are rightly rewarded by public praise. . . . But when a dull man works hard without producing anything worth while, and is thus unable to win public praise, to save his labour from going unrewarded God gives him a feeling of personal satisfaction, which no one can grudge him without being more than barbarously unfair. So God, who is just, lets frogs find satisfaction in their croaking."'

'These,' I said, 'are fine decisions in favour of vanity, ambition and avarice. What about envy, Father, is it harder to find excuses for that?'

'That is rather a delicate matter,' said the Father. 'One must use Fr. Bauny's distinction in his *Compendium of Sins*. For his opinion, ch. vii, p. 123 of the 5th and 6th editions, is "that

envy of your neighbour's spiritual good is mortal, but envy of his temporal good is only venial."'

'And why is that, Father?'

'Listen,' he said: '"For the good contained in temporal things is so slight, and of so little importance for heaven, that it is of no account in the eyes of God and his saints."'

'But, Father, if this good is so slight and of such small account, how can you allow homicide in its defence?'

'You are getting things wrong,' said the Father; 'it says that this good is of no account in the eyes of God and not in those of men.'

'I never thought of that,' I said, 'and I hope that with the help of such distinctions there will be no mortal sins left anywhere.'

'You must not think that,' said the Father; 'for there are some which are always mortal by nature, spiritual sloth, for example.'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'are all the comforts of life then lost?'

'Wait,' said the Father, 'when you see Escobar's definition of this vice, tr. 2, ex. 2, n. 81, you may judge differently; listen to it: "Sloth is being dejected at the fact that spiritual things are spiritual, for instance being distressed because sacraments are the source of grace. And it is a mortal sin."'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'I doubt whether anyone has been odd enough to think of being slothful in that way.'

'So Escobar says, n. 105,' said the Father: '"I confess that it is very rare for anyone ever to fall into the sin of sloth." Now do you understand the importance of defining things properly?'

'Yes, Father,' I said, 'and that reminds me of your other definitions of murder, ambush and superfluous wealth. Why do you not extend this method, Father, to all sorts of cases, in order to provide all sins with your brand of definition, so that it might become no longer a sin to indulge one's pleasures?'

'It is not always necessary,' he said, 'to change the definitions

of things to achieve that. You will see this in connexion with the pleasures of the table, which are certainly among the greatest in life, and which Escobar permits like this, n. 102, in his *Practice according to our Society*: "Is it lawful to eat and drink one's full without need and just for enjoyment? Yes, certainly, according to our Father Sanchez, provided that it is not injurious to health, because it is lawful for a natural appetite to enjoy acts appropriate to it: *An comedere et bibere usque ad satietatem absque necessitate ob solam voluptatem sit peccatum? Cum Sanctio negative respondeo, modo non obsit valetudine, quia licite potest appetitus naturalis suis actibus frui.*"'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'that is the most comprehensive passage and the most perfect principle of all your morality, and lends itself to some most convenient conclusions. What now, is gluttony then not even a venial sin?'

'No,' he said, 'not in the way I have just told you; but it would be a venial sin according to Escobar, n. 56, "if, without any need, one gorged oneself sick with food and drink: *si quis se usque ad vomitum ingurgitet.*"

'That is enough on that subject; now I want to talk to you about the facilities we have provided for the avoidance of sin in social intercourse and intrigues. One of the most embarrassing problems is how to avoid lying, especially when one would like people to believe something untrue. This is where our doctrine of equivocation is marvellously helpful, for it allows one "to use ambiguous terms, conveying a different meaning to the hearer from that in which one understands them oneself", as Sanchez says, *Moral Works*, pt. 2, bk. 3, ch. vi, n. 13.'

'I know that, Father,' I said.

'We have published it so widely,' he continued, 'that in the end everyone has heard of it. But I wonder if you know what to do when one cannot find any equivocal terms?'

'No, Father.'

'I thought as much,' he said; 'it is new: the doctrine of mental restrictions. Sanchez gives it in the same place: "One may

swear," he says, "that one has not done something, though one really has done it, by inwardly understanding that one did not do it on a certain day, or before one was born, or by implying some other similar circumstance, but using words with no meaning capable of conveying this; this is very convenient on many occasions, and is always quite legitimate when necessary, or useful, to health, honour or property."'

'What, Father! Is this not a lie, and even perjury?'

'No,' said the Father; 'Sanchez proves it in the same place, and our Father Filiutius too, tr. 25, ch. xi, n. 331: "because", he says, "it is the intention which determines the quality of an action." And he adds, n. 328, another safer means of avoiding a lie; after saying aloud "I swear that I did not do that" you add under your breath "today" or after saying aloud "I swear" you say under your breath "that I say", and then go on aloud "that I did not do that." You see that that is telling the truth.'

'I admit that,' I said; 'but we might find that it is telling the truth under one's breath and a lie aloud; anyhow I am afraid that a lot of people would not have enough presence of mind to use such methods.'

'Our Fathers,' he said, 'teach in the same place, for the sake of those who are unable to find such restrictions, that it is sufficient to avoid lying simply to say "that they did not do" what they had done, provided "they have the general intention of giving their words the meaning that a clever man would give them."'

'Tell me the truth. You have many times found yourself embarrassed because you did not know about this?'

'Sometimes,' I said.

'And will you not likewise admit that it would be often very convenient to be dispensed in conscience from keeping certain of one's promises?'

'It would, Father,' I said, 'be extremely convenient.'

'Listen then to Escobar in tr. 3, ex. 3, n. 48, where he gives

this general rule: "Promises are not binding if one has no intention of being bound when making them. Now it hardly ever happens that one does have such an intention unless one confirms them by oath or contract; so that when one simply says: I will do that, one means that one will do it unless one changes one's mind. For no one wants to deprive himself of his liberty in this way." He gives other rules that you can look at yourself, and ends by saying: "that all this comes from Molina and our other authors: *omnia ex Molina et aliis.*" And so it is not open to question.'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'I never knew that direction of the intention had the power to nullify promises.'

'You see,' said the Father, 'that this makes social intercourse much easier. But what has given us most trouble is regulating relations between men and women; for our Fathers are more reserved on matters of chastity. Not that they omit to deal with some rather curious and broad-minded questions, mainly for married or engaged persons.'

Thereupon I learnt some of the most extraordinary and beastly questions imaginable. He gave me enough of them to fill several letters; but I do not want even to quote the references, because you show my letters to all sorts of people, and I would not like to give those who only look for entertainment the opportunity of reading such things.

The only thing I can indicate to you out of what he showed me in their books, even those in French, is what you can see in Father Bauny's *Compendium of Sins*, p. 165, about certain little liberties which he explains, provided one properly directs one's intention, 'like passing for a gallant'; and you will be surprised to find there, p. 148, a moral principle concerning the power which he says girls have of disposing of their virginity without their parents' consent; here are his words: 'When it is done with the consent of the girl, although the father may have cause for complaint, this nevertheless does not mean that the said girl, or the man to whom she has prostituted herself,

has done him any wrong, or sinned against justice as regards him. For the girl is as much the owner of her virginity as of her body; she can do anything she likes with it, apart from suicide or cutting off her limbs.' You can judge the rest by that. That reminded me of a passage from a pagan poet,* who was a better casuist than these Fathers, because he said: 'that a girl's virginity does not wholly belong to her; part belongs to her father, part to her mother, and without them she may not dispose of it, not even in marriage.' And I doubt whether there exists a judge who does not regard the law as being the opposite of Father Bauny's principle.

That is all I can say of all that I heard, and it lasted so long that I was finally obliged to ask the Father to change the subject. He did so, and discussed their rules about women's clothes as follows:

'We will not speak,' he said,' of those with impure intentions; but as for the others, Escobar says in tr. 1, ex. 8, n. 5: "If one dresses up with no evil intention, but just to satisfy a natural inclination to vanity, *ob naturalem inclinationem*, it is either just venial sin or no sin at all." And Fr. Bauny, in his *Compendium of Sins*, ch. xlvi, p. 1094, says: "although the woman realizes the bad effect which, by taking so much trouble over her appearance, she will have on the bodies and souls of those looking at her decked out in rich and precious clothes, she still commits no sin by wearing them." And among others he quotes Father Sanchez as holding the same view.'

'But, Father, how then do your authors answer passages in Scripture, which so vehemently denounce the least things of this kind?'

'Lessius,' said the Father, 'satisfies that with this learned answer, *On Justice*, book 4, ch. iv, d. 14, n. 114: "These passages of Scripture were only precepts applying to women in those days, so that they should offer pagans an edifying example by their modesty."'

* Catullus.

'And where did he get that, Father?'

'It does not matter where he got it; it is enough that the opinions of these great men are always probable in themselves. But Fr. Le Moyne modifies this general permission, for he is unwilling to tolerate it at all in older women: it is in his *Easy Piety* among other places pp. 127, 157, 163. "Youth," he says, "has a natural right to finery. It may be lawful to dress up at an age which is the flower and prime of life. But that is as far as one must go; it would be misplaced oddity to look for roses in the snow. It is only for the stars to be always dancing, because they have the gift of perpetual youth. The best thing to do on this point would be to consult common sense and a good mirror, to yield to decency and necessity and to withdraw when night approaches."'

'That is most judicious,' I said.

'But,' he went on, 'to show you how much care our Fathers have taken over everything, I will tell you that, as it would often be no use young women having permission to dress up unless they were also given the wherewithal to meet the expenses, they have laid down another principle for their benefit, which can be seen in Escobar, in the chapter on *Larceny*, tr. 1, ex. 9, n. 13: "A woman," he says, "may take money from her husband in several circumstances, among others for gambling, buying clothes and other things she needs."'

'Indeed, Father, that rounds it off nicely.'

'There are a lot of other things all the same,' said the Father; 'but we must leave them to speak of more important principles, which facilitate religious practices, for instance the way of attending mass. Our great theologian, Gaspar Hurtado, *On Sacraments*, vol. II, d. 5, dis. 2, and Coninch, q. 83, a. 6, n. 197, teach in this connexion: "that it is enough to be present at mass in body, though absent in spirit, provided one remains in an outwardly respectful attitude." And Vasquez goes further, for he says "one satisfies the obligation of hearing mass even if one intends to do nothing about it." And that is also in Escobar, tr.

1, ex. 11, nn. 74 and 107, and again in tr. 1, ex. 1, n. 116, where he explains it with the example of people forcibly taken to mass, who have the express intention of not hearing it.'

'Truly,' I said, 'I would never believe it if anyone else said so.'

'Indeed,' he said, 'that does rather need the authority of such great men; as Escobar says in tr. 1, ex. 11, n. 31: "that a wicked intention, like that of looking at women lustfully, combined with that of hearing mass, does not prevent one from satisfying the obligation: *nec alia prava intentio, ut aspiciendi libidinose foeminas.*"

'But there is another useful thing in our learned Turrianus, *Selections*, pt. 2, d. 16, dub. 17: "One can hear half of one priest's mass, and then the other half of another's, and one can also hear the end of one first and then the beginning of another." And I will also tell you that it has even been found lawful: "to hear two halves of mass at the same time said by two different priests, when one begins the mass as the other comes to the Elevation; because it is possible to pay attention to both sides at the same time, and two halves of a mass make a whole one: *duae medietates unam missam constituunt.*" This has been decided by our Fathers Bauny, tr. 6, q. 9, p. 312; Hurtado, *On Sacraments*, vol. 11, "On the Mass", d. 5, diff. 4; Azorius, pt. 1, book 7, ch. iii, q. 3; Escobar, tr. 1, ex. 11, n. 73, in the chapter on "Practice regarding the hearing of mass according to our Society." And you will see what consequences he derives from it in the same book, Lyons editions of 1644 and 1646, in these terms: "From this I conclude that you can hear mass in a very short time; as when, for example, you find four masses going on at the same time, so arranged that one is beginning when the next has reached the Gospel, a third the Consecration and the last the Communion."'

'To be sure, Father, it would only take a minute to hear mass at Notre-Dame by this method.'

'You see then,' he said, 'that they have done their very best to make it easy to hear mass.

'But now I want to show you how they have facilitated use of the sacraments, especially that of penance. For that is where you will see our Fathers on their very kindest behaviour; and it will fill you with wonder to find that piety, which used to disconcert everyone, could have been treated by our Fathers with such prudence: "that casting down the fearsome figure which the devils had set up at its door" they have made it "easier than vice, and less trouble than pleasure"; so that "just living is incomparably harder than virtuous living", to use Father Le Moyne's words, pp. 244 and 291 of his *Easy Piety*. Is that not a marvellous change?'

'Truly, Father,' I said, 'I cannot help telling you what I think. I am afraid that you have taken the wrong steps, and that such indulgence is liable to shock more people than it attracts. Mass, for example, is something so great and holy that it would be sufficient to discredit your authors completely in the minds of many to show them how they speak about it.'

'That is very true,' said the Father, 'with regard to certain people, but do you not know that we adapt ourselves to all kinds of people? You seem to have forgotten what I have so often told you on this subject. I want therefore to discuss it with you at leisure next time, and put off till then our discussion about mitigations of confession. I will explain it to you so well that you will never forget it.'

At that we parted, and so I imagine that our next conversation will be about their policy.

I am, etc.

Since writing this letter I have seen the book *Paradise opened by a hundred easily performed devotions* by Fr. Barry; and the *Mark of Predestination* by Fr. Binet. They are worth looking at.

TENTH LETTER WRITTEN TO A PROVINCIAL BY ONE OF HIS FRIENDS

Paris, 2 August 1656

SIR,

I will not be dealing yet with the policy of the Society but with one of its greatest principles. You will read about mitigations of confession, which are surely the best means the Fathers have devised for attracting all and rebuffing none. One must know that before proceeding further. That is why the Father thought fit to give me the following instruction on the subject:

'You have seen,' he said, 'by everything that I have told you so far, how successfully our Fathers have laboured to reveal, by their lights, that a great number of things are lawful which were once regarded as forbidden; but because there still remain some sins for which no excuse could be found, and confession is the only cure, it was very necessary to smoothe out its difficulties by methods which I am now going to tell you. And so, having shown you in all our previous conversations how we have eased the scruples which troubled consciences, by proving that what people thought wrong is not so at all, it remains to show you now the method of easily expiating what is genuinely sinful, by making confession as easy as it used to be hard.'

'And by what method, Father?'

'By those remarkable subtleties,' he said, 'which are peculiar to our Society, and which our Fathers in Flanders call in the *Image of the First Century*, book 3, or. 1, p. 401 and book 1, ch. ii, "holy and pious stratagems, and a holy artifice of devotion: *piam et religiosam calliditatem. Et pietatis solertiam*," in book 3, ch. viii. It is by means of such inventions that "crimes are today expiated *alacrius*, with greater alacrity and fervour than they used to be committed, so that many people wipe out their blots as fast as they make them: *plurimi vix citius maculas contrahunt, quam eluunt*," as it says in the same place.'

'Please tell me then, Father, about these salutary *stratagems*.'

'There are several,' he said, 'for as there are many difficulties about confession, mitigations have been devised for each. And because the chief difficulties encountered are the shame of confessing certain sins, the trouble of specifying their circumstances, the penance to be done, the resolve to sin no more, avoidance of proximate occasions leading to them, and regret at having committed them, I hope to show you today that there is almost nothing irksome left in all that, so careful have they been to remove everything harsh and bitter from so necessary a remedy.

'For, to begin with the difficulty of confessing certain sins, since you well know that it is often rather important to keep the good opinion of one's confessor, is it not a great convenience to permit, as our Fathers do, among others Escobar, also quoting Sanchez, tr. 7, ex. 4, n. 135: "having two confessors, one for mortal and the other for venial sins, in order to preserve a good reputation with one's usual confessor, *uti bonam famam apud ordinarium tueatur*, provided that one does not on that account take the opportunity of remaining in mortal sin"? And he then gives another subtle means of confessing a sin to one's usual confessor without letting him see that it has been committed since the last confession. "It is," he says, "by making a general confession, and mixing up this latest sin with others of which one is accusing oneself in general." He says the same thing again, *Princ.*, ex. 2, n. 73. And you will admit, I am sure, that this decision of Father Bauny, *Moral Theology*, tr. 4, q. 5, p. 137, also provides much relief from the shame of confessing one's relapses: "that except on certain rare occasions the confessor has no right to ask if the sin of which one accuses oneself is habitual; and one is not obliged to answer him on that point, because he has no right to impose on his penitent the shame of confessing frequent relapses."'

'What Father! I might as well say that a physician has no right to ask his patient if he has had the fever for long. Do not

all sins differ according to different circumstances? And must not a true penitent intend to expose the whole state of his conscience to his confessor, as sincerely and wholeheartedly as if he were speaking to Christ, in whose place the priest stands? And is one not far removed from such a disposition if one hides frequent relapses in order to hide the gravity of one's sin?'

I saw that this embarrassed the good Father, so that he thought to evade rather than resolve this difficulty by telling me another of their rules, which only promotes further disorder, without in any way justifying this decision of Father Bauny: which is in my view one of their most pernicious principles, and most likely to maintain the wicked in their bad habits.

'I agree,' he said, 'that habit increases the wickedness of sin, but it does not change its nature; and that is why there is no obligation to confess it, according to our Fathers' rule, quoted by Escobar, *Princ.*, ex. n. 39: "One is obliged to confess circumstances which change the nature of a sin, not those which aggravate it."

'It is in accordance with this rule that our Father Granados says, in part 5., cont. 7, tr. 9, d. 9, n. 22: "That if one has eaten meat in Lent, it is enough to accuse oneself of having broken the fast, without saying whether it was by eating meat or by having two meatless meals." And according to our Father Reginaldus, tr. 1, book 6, ch. iv, n. 114, "a fortune-teller who has used the black art is not obliged to declare this circumstance; but it is enough to say that he has been mixed up in fortune-telling, without expressly saying whether by chiromancy or a pact with the devil." And Fagundez, of our Society, pt. 2, book 4, ch. iii, n. 17, also says: "Rape is not a circumstance which one is bound to reveal when the girl has consented." Our Father Escobar quotes all this in the same place, nn. 41, 61, 62, with several other rather curious decisions concerning circumstances which one is not obliged to confess. You can read them there for yourself.'

'There,' I said, 'are some *artifices of devotion* that are really accommodating.'

'Yet all that,' he said, 'would be nothing if we had not in addition mitigated penance, which is one of the things keeping people away from confession. But now even the most delicate souls could feel no apprehension, after what we maintained in our theses at the Collège de Clermont: "If the confessor imposes a suitable penance, *convenientem*, and the penitent still finds it unacceptable, he may withdraw, renouncing both absolution and the penance imposed." And Escobar again says in his *Practice of penance according to our Society*, tr. 7, ex. 4, n. 188: "If the penitent declares that he wishes to defer doing his penance until the life hereafter, and suffer in Purgatory all the punishment due to him, then the confessor must impose a very light penance on him, to preserve the integrity of the sacrament, especially if he recognizes that a heavier penance would not be accepted."'

'I think,' I said, 'that if that were so confession should no longer be called the sacrament of penance.'

'You are wrong,' he said; 'for some penance at least is always given just for the form.'

'But, Father, do you consider someone fit to receive absolution who is unwilling to do anything unpleasant to expiate his offences? And when people are in that state, ought you not to retain rather than remit their sins? Have you the right idea about your ministry? And do you not know that in it you exercise the power of binding and loosing? Do you think it is lawful to give absolution indiscriminately to all who ask for it, without first finding out if Christ looses in heaven those whom you loose on earth?'

'What!' said the Father, 'do you think we do not know "that the confessor must constitute himself judge of his penitent's disposition, both because he is obliged not to dispense the sacraments to those who are unworthy of them, since Christ bade him to dispense them faithfully and not to cast holy things

to dogs, and because it is a judge's duty to judge justly, loosing those who are worthy and binding those who are unworthy, and also because he must not absolve those whom Christ condemns?"'

'Whose words are those, Father?'

'Our Father Filiutius's,' he replied, 'vol. 1, tr. 7, n. 354.'

'You surprise me,' I said; 'I thought they were by one of the Fathers of the Church. But, Father, this passage must really dismay confessors, and make them very wary in dispensing this sacrament to find out whether their penitents' remorse is sufficient, and whether their promises to sin no more in the future are acceptable.'

'That is no trouble at all,' said the Father. 'Filiutius had no intention of leaving confessors in this difficulty; and that is why after these words he gives them this easy method of getting out of it: "the confessor can easily set his mind at rest concerning his penitent's disposition. For if he does not give sufficient signs of sorrow, the confessor has only to ask him if he does not hate the sins in his soul; and if he answers that he does, the confessor is bound to believe him. And the same must be said of resolve for the future, unless there is some obligation to make restitution or avoid some proximate occasion of sin."'

'Now that passage, Father, I can see is by Filiutius.'

'You are mistaken,' said the Father: 'for he took it word for word from Suarez, in par. 3, vol. IV, disp. 32, sec. 2, n. 2.'

'But, Father, this last passage of Filiutius cancels out what he had established in the first. For the confessors will no longer have the power of setting themselves up as judges of their penitents' disposition, since they are obliged to take their word for it, even when they do not give sufficient signs of remorse. Is there so much certainty in people's word that this sign is conclusive by itself? I doubt whether experience has taught your Fathers that all who make such promises keep them, and unless I am mistaken they often experience the contrary.'

'No matter,' said the Father: 'confessors are still put under

the obligation of believing them; for Father Bauny, who has treated this question thoroughly in his *Compendium of Sins*, ch. xlvi, pp. 1090, 1091 and 1092, concludes: "that whenever those who often relapse, without any sign of mending their ways, come before their confessor, and tell him that they are sorry for the past and intend to do better in the future, he must take them at their word, although it is to be presumed that such resolutions do not go beyond mere lip-service. And though they subsequently commit the same faults more freely and excessively than ever, they may, in my opinion, still be given absolution." That, I am sure, clears up all your doubts.'

'But, Father,' I said, 'I think you are imposing a heavy burden on confessors by obliging them to believe the opposite of what they see.'

'You do not understand,' he said; 'it means that they are obliged to act and absolve as though they believed this resolution to be firm and constant, although they do not in fact believe it to be so. Our Fathers Suarez and Filiutius explain this after the passages just quoted. For after saying "that the priest is obliged to take his penitent at his word", they add "that the confessor does not necessarily have to be convinced that his penitent's resolve will be carried out, or even deem it probable; but it is enough for him to think that at the moment that is the penitent's general intention, although he is bound to relapse very shortly. And that is what all our authors teach: *ita docent omnes auctores.*" Are you going to doubt something taught by all our authors?'

'But, Father, what then is to become of what Father Petau himself had to acknowledge in his Preface to *Public Penance*, p. 4: "That the Holy Fathers, doctors and councils agree, as a matter of certain truth, that the penitence which is preparatory to the Eucharist must be genuine, constant, courageous and not cowardly and torpid, or liable to relapses and backsliding."'

'Do you not see,' he said, 'that Father Petau is speaking of the

ancient Church? But that is now so "unseasonable", to quote our Fathers' terms, that according to Father Bauny, the opposite alone is correct; see tr. 4, q. 15, p. 95: "Some authors say that absolution must be refused to those who often relapse into the same sins, especially if after they have been absolved several times there is no sign of improvement: others deny this. But the only correct opinion is that they must not be refused absolution. Even though they do not profit from all the advice they are given, do not keep their promises to change their life, make no effort to purify themselves, it does not matter; and whatever others may say, the correct opinion, and the one to be followed, is that even in all these cases they must be given absolution." And tr. 4, q. 22, p. 100: "One must neither refuse nor defer absolution to those guilty of habitual sins against the law of God, nature and the Church, even though one can see no hope of improvement, *etsi emendationes futurae nulla spes appareat.*"'

'But, Father,' I said, 'if they are always sure of receiving absolution, sinners might be encouraged . . .'

'I take your point,' he interrupted; 'but listen to Father Bauny, q.15: "A person may be absolved who admits that the hope of being absolved encouraged him to sin more easily than he would have done without it." And Father Caussin, defending this proposition, says on p. 211 of his *Answers to Moral Theology*, "that if it were not correct, most people would be barred from use of the confessional, and sinners would have no other remedy but the branch of a tree and a rope."'

'Oh Father! How these principles will attract people to your confessionals!'

'Well,' he said, 'you would never believe how many do come: "we are overwhelmed and as it were overrun by the mass of our penitents, *penitentium numero obruimur*," as it says in the *Image of our First Century*, book 3, ch. viii.'

'I know,' I said, 'one easy way to free yourselves from the crush. It would simply be, Father, to oblige sinners to avoid

proximate occasions. This one device would bring you enough relief.'

'We do not want such relief,' he said, 'on the contrary; for as it says in the same book, book 3, ch. vii, p. 374: "The aim of our Society is to strive to establish virtues, wage war on vices, and serve a great number of souls." And as there are few souls willing to avoid proximate occasions, we have been obliged to define what a proximate occasion is, as can be seen from Escobar, in *The Practice of our Society*, tr. 7, ex. 4, n. 226: "An occasion on which one sins only rarely is not called proximate, for example sinning on a sudden impulse with a woman living under the same roof, three or four times a year," p. 1082; and again, p. 1089, where he asks: "what should be done with masters and servants, or cousins of both sexes living together, who are mutually encouraged to sin through having such occasion?"'

'They must be separated,' I said.

'He says so too, "if relapses are frequent, and almost daily; but if they only rarely sin together, like once or twice a month, and cannot separate without great inconvenience and hardship, they may be absolved, according to these authors, among others Suarez, provided that they promise to sin no more, and truly regret the past."'

I understood him very well; for he had already told me what the confessor must be content with in order to judge this regret.

'And Father Bauny,' he went on, 'allows (pp. 1083 and 1084) those involved in proximate occasions "to remain in them, when they would be unable to avoid them without giving rise to gossip and being inconvenienced thereby." And he says likewise in his *Moral Theology*, tr. 4, *On Penance*, q. 14, p. 94, and q. 13, p. 93: "that one can and must absolve a woman who has under her roof a man with whom she often sins, if she cannot decently make him leave, or has some reason to keep him: *si non potest honeste ejicere, aut habeat aliquam causam retinendi:*

provided that she really proposes to sin no more with him."'

'Oh Father!' I said, 'the obligation to avoid these occasions becomes much less strict if one is dispensed from it as soon as it becomes inconvenient; but I think that at least an obligation remains, according to your Fathers, where there is no difficulty.'

'Yes,' said the Father, 'though even so it is not without exceptions. For Father Bauny says in the same place: "It is lawful for all kinds of person to enter brothels in order to convert fallen women, although it is highly probable that they will sin; for example, if they have already found by experience that they fall into sin at the sight and blandishments of these women. And although some doctors do not approve this opinion and believe that it is not lawful voluntarily to endanger one's salvation in order to help one's neighbour, I still very gladly embrace this opinion which they contest."'

'There, Father, is a new sort of preacher. But what are Father Bauny's grounds for giving them such a mission?'

'One of the principles,' he said, 'which he gives in the same place after Basile Ponce. I spoke to you about it before, and I expect you remember it. It is "that we may look for an occasion directly and for its own sake, *primo et per se*, for the temporal or spiritual good of ourselves or our neighbour."'

These passages appalled me so much that I almost broke off our interview there. But I restrained myself, to let him go all the way, and contented myself with saying:

'What is the connexion, Father, between this doctrine and that of the Gospel, which obliges us "to pluck out our eyes, and cut off the most necessary things if they are harmful to salvation"?* And how can you conceive that someone who voluntarily remains in occasions of sin sincerely loathes them? Is it not on the contrary obvious that he is not affected by it as he should be, and that he has not yet come to that real conversion of heart which makes one love God as much as one once loved creatures?'

* cf. Matt. v, 29.

'What?' he said. 'That would be true contrition. You do not seem to know that, as Father Pintereau says in pt. 2, p. 50 of *The Abbé de Boisic:* "All our Fathers unanimously teach that it is erroneous and almost heretical to say that contrition is necessary, and that mere attrition, even when *solely* motivated by the pains of hell, which excludes the will to offend, is insufficient with the sacrament."'

'What, Father! It is almost an article of faith that attrition motivated solely by fear of punishment is sufficient with the sacrament? I think that is peculiar to your Fathers. For others, who believe attrition to be sufficient with the sacrament, at least want it combined with some love of God. And, furthermore, it seems to me that your authors themselves used not to maintain that this doctrine was so certain. For this is how your Father Suarez speaks of it, *On Penitence*, q. 90, art. 4, disp. 15, sect. 4, n. 17: "Although it is a probable opinion that attrition is sufficient with the sacrament, yet it is not certain, and may be wrong. *Non est certa, et potest esse falsa.* And if it is wrong, attrition is not sufficient for salvation. Therefore someone who knowingly dies in that state is willingly exposing himself to the mortal danger of eternal damnation. For this opinion is neither very ancient nor very widespread. *Nec valde antiqua, nec multum communis.*" Sanchez did not find it so certain either, since he says in his *Summa*, book 1, ch. ix, n. 34: "that a sick man and his confessor who at the hour of death were content with attrition with the sacrament would be committing mortal sin, because of the great danger of eternal damnation to which the penitent would be exposed if the opinion that attrition with the sacrament is sufficient turned out to be incorrect." Nor does Comitolus, when he says, *Moral Answers*, book 1, q. 32, nn. 7, 8: "It is not too sure that attrition with the sacrament suffices."'

Whereupon the good Father stopped me.

'What is this?' he said. 'You read our authors then? You do well, but you would do still better only to read them with one

of us. Do you not see that by reading them on your own, you have concluded that these passages contradict those who maintain our doctrine of attrition? Whereas we could have shown you that nothing more enhances them. For what a glorious thing it is for our present-day Fathers, in less than no time, to have spread their opinion so generally abroad that, apart from theologians, there is almost nobody who imagines that what we now hold concerning attrition has not been from time immemorial the sole belief of the faithful! And so when you show by our Fathers themselves that only a few years ago "this opinion was not certain" what are you doing but giving our latest authors all the credit for establishing it?

'So Diana, our intimate friend, thought he would please us by indicating by what stages this position was reached. He does this on p. 5, tr. 13, where he says: "the old scholastics used to maintain that contrition was necessary as soon as one had committed a mortal sin. But since then it has come to be thought that this was only obligatory on feast-days, and then when some great calamity threatened all the people; according to others, one was obliged not to defer it for long at the approach of death; but our Fathers Hurtado and Vasquez excellently refuted all these opinions, and established that it was only obligatory when there was no other way of being absolved, or at the hour of death." But to continue the marvellous progress of this doctrine, I will add that our Father Fagundez, *Precepts*, vol. II, ch. iv, n. 13; Granados in 3, p. contr. 7, tr. 3, d. 3, sec. 4, n. 17; and Escobar, tr. 7, ex. 4, n. 88, in the *Practice according to our Society*, decide: "that contrition is not even necessary on one's deathbed, because if attrition with the sacrament was not sufficient at the hour of death, it would follow that attrition would not be sufficient with the sacrament." And our learned Hurtado, *On Sacraments*, d. 6, quoted by Diana, part 4, tr. 4, Misc., R. 193, and Escobar, tr. 7, ex. 4, n. 91, goes still further, for he says: "Is it sufficient to regret one's sins if inspired solely by the temporal ills they cause, like

loss of health or money? We must distinguish. If one does not think that this ill is sent by the hand of God, such regret is not sufficient; but if one believes that this ill is sent by God, as all ills," says Diana, "except sin come from him, such regret is sufficient." That is what Escobar says in the *Practice of our Society*. Our Father François L'Amy also maintained the same thing, vol. VIII, disp. 3, n. 13.'

'You surprise me, Father; for I cannot see anything in all this attrition that is not quite natural; and thus a sinner could make himself worthy of absolution without any supernatural grace. Now no one can be unaware that this is a heresy condemned by the Council.'

'I should have thought the same as you,' he said, 'and yet it cannot be so. For our Fathers of the Collège de Clermont maintained in their theses of 23 May and 6 June 1644, col. 4, n. 1: "that an act of attrition may be holy and sufficient for the sacrament, although not supernatural." And in that of August 1643: "An act of attrition which is purely natural is sufficient for the sacrament, provided it is honest: *ad sacramentum sufficit attritio naturalis, modo honesta.*" There is no more to be said, unless you want to add a consequence easily drawn from these principles: which is that contrition is not only unnecessary for the sacrament, but would on the contrary be harmful, because by wiping out sins itself it would leave nothing for the sacrament to do. Our Father Valentia, that famous Jesuit, says that, vol. IV, disp. 7, q. 8, p. 4: "Contrition is by no means necessary for obtaining the chief effect of the sacrament; it is rather on the contrary an obstacle: *imo obstat potius quominus effectus sequatur.*" One could not wish for more in favour of attrition.'

'I agree, Father; but allow me to tell you my view, and point out the excesses to which this doctrine gives rise. When you say that "attrition motivated solely by fear of punishment" is enough with the sacrament to justify sinners, does it not follow that one could expiate sins in this way all one's life, and so be

saved without ever in one's life having loved God? Now, would your Fathers dare maintain that?'

'I see very well,' the Father answered, 'from what you tell me, that you need to know our Fathers' doctrine touching the love of God. It is the finishing touch of their morality, and the most important of all. You must have gathered it from the passages on contrition that I quoted. But here are some more, so do not interrupt me, for the sequence itself is important. Listen to Escobar, who quotes the various opinions of our authors on this subject in his *Practice of the love of God according to our Society*, tr. 1, ex. 2, n. 21, and tr. 5, ex. 4, n. 8, on this question: "When is one obliged actually to feel affection for God? Suarez says it is enough if one loves him before dying, but without specifying a time; Vasquez that it is still sufficient at the hour of death; others at baptism; others again, when one is obliged to be contrite; others on feast-days. But our Father Castro Palao attacks all these opinions, and rightly, *merito*. Hurtado de Mendoza claims that one is obliged to do it once a year, and that we are very favourably treated by not being obliged to do so more often. But our Father Coninch thinks that one is obliged to do it every three or four years; Henriquez every five years; but Filiutius says it is probable that one is not strictly obliged to do it every five years. When, then? He leaves it to the judgement of the wise."'

I let all this trifling pass, where human wit makes such insolent sport with the love of God.

'But,' he went on, 'our Father Antoine Sirmond, who scores a triumph on this matter in his remarkable book *The Defence of Virtue*, "where he speaks French in France", as he says to the reader, argues thus in tr. 2, sect. 1; pp. 12, 13, 14, etc: "St Thomas says we are obliged to love God as soon as we reach the age of reason; that is rather early. Scotus, every Sunday. On what grounds? Others, when sorely tempted. Yes, should there be no other way of avoiding temptation. Sotus, when receiving a blessing from God; right, to be thankful. Others,

at death; that is very late. I do not believe either that it is each time one receives a sacrament; attrition is enough with confession, if it is convenient. Suarez says that one is obliged to at a certain time; but what time? He leaves you to judge, and has no idea himself. Now if this doctor did not know, I do not know who does." He finally concludes that all one is obliged to do, strictly speaking, is to observe the other commandments, without any affection for God, and without giving one's heart to him, so long as one does not hate him. He proves this throughout his second treatise. You will see it on every page, among others 16, 19, 24, 28, where he says these words: "In bidding us love him, God is content that we should keep his other commandments. If God had said: I will damn you if you do not also give me your heart, would such a motive, in your view, be consistent with the aim that God could and should have had? It is written therefore that we shall love God by doing his will, as if we loved him in our hearts, as if the motive of charity led us to do so. If that really happens, so much the better; otherwise we shall still strictly obey the commandment to love God by having works, so that (observe God's goodness) we are not so much bidden to love him as not to hate him."

'This is how our Fathers have dispensed men from the *irksome* obligation of actually loving God. And this doctrine has so many advantages that our Fathers Annat, Pintereau, Le Moyne and A. Sirmond himself have vigorously defended it against attempts to attack it. You have only to look at their *Answers to Moral Theology*; and Father Pintereau's in pt. 2 of the *Abbé de Boisic*, p. 53, will allow you to assess the value of this dispensation by the price which he says it cost, namely the blood of Christ. This is the crowning point of this doctrine. You will find there that this dispensation from the *tiresome* obligation of loving God is the privilege of the Evangelical over the Judaic law. "It was reasonable," he says, "that in the law of grace of the New Testament, God should remove the

tiresome and difficult obligation, which existed in the law of rigour, of performing an act of perfect contrition in order to be justified; and that he should institute the sacraments to make good the deficiency and promote an easier disposition. Otherwise, indeed, Christians, who are the children, would not find it any easier to win back the favour of their Father than the Jews, who were slaves, to obtain mercy from their Lord."'

'Oh Father! You test patience beyond all endurance, and no one can listen to the things I have just heard without horror.'

'It is not my work,' he said.

'I know that very well, Father, but you are not averse to it; and far from loathing the authors of these principles, you esteem them. Are you not afraid that your consent will make you an accomplice of their crime? And can you fail to know that St Paul considers "worthy of death not only the authors of evils, but also those who consent to them"?* Was it not enough to permit men so many forbidden things by means of the palliations you have introduced? Did you also have to give them occasion to commit the very crimes you could not excuse, by offering them absolution so easily and surely, by destroying priests' power to that end, and obliging them to absolve, more as slaves than judges, the most inveterate sinners, with no fear of God, no change of life, no sign of regret, apart from promises broken a hundred times; without penance, "if they are unwilling to accept it"; and without avoiding the occasions of vice "if they find it inconvenient"? But you go even further, and the liberty you have taken to shake the most sacred rules of Christian conduct does not stop short of the total overthrow of the love of God. You break "the great commandment on which hang all the law and the prophets", you attack piety in its heart; you take away the spirit that gives it life; you say that the love of God is not necessary to salvation; and you even go so far as to claim that "this dispensation from loving God is the advantage that Christ brought to the world".

* cf. Rom. 1, 32.

This is the height of impiety. The price of Christ's blood shall be to win for us the dispensation from loving him; but "since God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son",* the world, redeemed by him, shall be exempted from loving him! Strange theology for our times! You dare to lift St Paul's "anathema against those who do not love the Lord Jesus."† You destroy what St John says, that "he that loveth not abideth in death",‡ and what Jesus says himself, that "he that loveth him not keepeth not his sayings."§ Thus those who have never loved God all their lives are by you made worthy to enjoy him throughout eternity. This is the mystery of iniquity accomplished. Open your eyes at last, Father, and if you have not been touched by the other aberrations of your casuists, may these final ones deliver you by their very extravagance. I wish this with all my heart for you and all your Fathers, and pray God that he may deign to show them how false is the light that has led them to the brink of such precipices, and that he may fill with his love those who dispense men from loving him.'

After some remarks in this strain I left the Father, and I see very little likelihood of going back. But do not regret this; for if it were necessary to go on discussing their principles with you, I have read enough of their books to be able to tell you almost as much about their morality and perhaps more about their policy than he would have done himself.

I am, etc.

* John III, 16. † cf. I Cor., XVI, 22. ‡ I John III, 14. § John XIV, 24.

ELEVENTH LETTER WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS TO A PROVINCIAL TO THE REVEREND JESUIT FATHERS

18 August 1656

REVEREND FATHERS,

I have seen the letters you are circulating against those I wrote to a friend of mine about your moral teaching. One of the main points of your defence is that I have not treated your precepts seriously enough: you repeat this constantly in everything you write, going so far as to say 'that I ridiculed sacred things'.

Such a charge, Fathers, is as unexpected as it is unfair; for where can you find a passage where I ridicule sacred things? You specifically refer to 'the Mohatra contract and the story of Jean d'Alba'. But is this what you call sacred things?

Do you regard the Mohatra as worthy of such veneration that it is blasphemy to speak disrespectfully of it? Are Father Bauny's lessons on theft, which led Jean d'Alba to steal from you, so holy that you are justified in treating as impious anyone who laughs at them?

What, Fathers, are we to accept the fantasies of your writers as articles of faith? Is no one to be able to laugh at passages from Escobar, and the fantastic and unchristian decisions of your other authors, without being accused of scoffing at religion? Can you possibly have dared to repeat so often something so unreasonable? By criticizing me for ridiculing your aberrations, are you not afraid of giving me a fresh chance to ridicule this charge and make it rebound against you by showing that all I laughed at was the ridiculous content of your books? Thus in ridiculing your moral teaching I am as far from ridiculing sacred things as your casuistry is from the sacred teaching of the Gospel.

Indeed, Fathers, there is a lot of difference between laughing at religion and laughing at those who profane it by their

extravagant opinions. It would be impious to show too little respect for the truths revealed by the Holy Spirit; but it would be equally impious to show too little contempt for the falsehoods which man's spirit sets up against them.

Since you force me into this argument, Fathers, I would ask you to consider that, while Christian truths deserve love and respect, the contrary errors deserve contempt and hatred. This is because there are two things about the truths of our religion: a divine beauty which inspires love and a holy majesty which inspires awe; and there are similarly two things about these errors: an impiety which inspires repugnance and an impertinence which inspires derision. And that is why, as the truth has always filled the saints with feelings both of love and fear, their wisdom being wholly comprehended between fear, its beginning, and love, its end, error likewise has inspired them with feelings of both hatred and contempt, and they show equal zeal in forcibly rejecting the wickedness of the ungodly as in laughing to scorn their aberration and folly.

Do not try therefore, Fathers, to make people believe that it is unworthy of a Christian to treat errors with scorn, since it is a simple matter to inform those who are unaware of it that such behaviour is right, common among the Fathers of the Church, and authorized by Scripture, by the example of the greatest saints and of God himself.

For do we not find God both hating and despising sinners, so much so that at the hour of their death, the moment when their condition is most deplorable and wretched, the divine wisdom will add mockery and derision to the vengeance and wrath which condemn them to eternal torments: '*I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh*' [Prov. I. 26]. And the saints, acting in the same spirit, will behave in the same way, since, according to David, when they see the punishment of the wicked: 'The righteous also shall see and shall fear and shall laugh at him.' [Ps. LII. 6] And Job says the same: 'The innocent shall laugh them to scorn.'[Job XXII. 19]

But it is a very remarkable thing in this connexion that in God's first words to man after the Fall we find mockery and 'biting irony' according to the Fathers. For after Adam had been disobedient, hoping, as the devil had said, to be made like unto God, Scripture shows that as a punishment God made him subject to death, and after reducing him to this miserable condition, due wages of his sin, mocked his plight in these derisive words: '*Behold the man is become as one of us,*' [Gen. III. 22]: which, according to St Chrysostom and the exegetes, is 'a bitter and wounding irony' with which God 'sorely stung him'. 'Adam,' says Rupert, 'deserved such ironic mockery, and such ironic phrases brought his folly home to him much more fully than serious ones could have done.' And Hugh of St Victor says the same thing, adding that 'this irony was fully called for by his foolish credulity; and that this sort of mockery is a righteous action when used against someone who has deserved it!'

So you see, Fathers, that mockery is sometimes the best way to bring men back to their senses, and in that case is a righteous action; because, as Jeremiah says: 'The actions of those that stray should be mocked for their vanity: *they are vanity, the work of errors.*' [Jer. LI, 18] And far from it being impious to laugh at them, such action derives from divine wisdom, according to St Augustine: 'The wise laugh at the foolish because they are wise, not with their own wisdom, but with that divine wisdom which will laugh at the death of the wicked.'

Similarly prophets filled with the spirit of God have practised such mockery, as we see from the examples of Daniel and Elijah. In fact the words of Our Lord himself are not without examples of the same thing; and St Augustine remarks that when Our Lord wanted to humiliate Nicodemus, who thought himself well versed in the law: 'seeing him puffed up with pride at being a doctor among the Jews, he strains and confounds his presumption by asking such difficult questions: What! he said, art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?

[John III, 10] Which comes to the same as saying: Proud prince, acknowledge your ignorance.' And SS. Chrysostom and Cyril make this comment: 'He deserved to be ridiculed in this way'.

So you see, Fathers, that if it should happen today that men claiming to be masters among Christians, like Nicodemus and the Pharisees among the Jews, were ignorant of the principles of religion, maintaining, for instance, that 'you can be saved without ever having loved God throughout your life', it would only be following Our Lord's example to ridicule their vanity and ignorance.

I am quite sure, Fathers, that these holy examples will be enough to convince you that it is not behaving unlike the saints to laugh at the aberrations and errors of men; otherwise we should have to censure the conduct of the greatest Doctors of the Church, whose practice this was, like St Jerome in his letters and writings against Jovinian, Vigilantius and the Pelagians: Tertullian, in his *Apology* against the follies of idolaters: St Augustine against the religious of Africa, whom he calls the hairy ones: St Irenaeus against the Gnostics: St Bernard and the other Fathers of the Church, who being themselves imitators of the Apostles, should be imitated by the faithful throughout all ages, since they are set up, whatever anyone may say, as the true models even for Christians of the present day.

I therefore saw no harm in following them. As I think I have made the point sufficiently I will add no more on this subject, except these excellent words of Tertullian, which explain my entire conduct: 'What I have done is only sport before a real attack. I have shown what wounds can be inflicted on you rather than actually inflict them. If there happen to be passages which provoke laughter it is because the subjects themselves invited it. There are many things which deserve to be thus ridiculed and derided lest they should acquire any importance by being attacked seriously. Vanity calls for nothing but

derision; and it is the proper privilege of truth to laugh, because she is gay, and to ridicule her enemies, because she is sure of victory. It is true that one must be careful to see that the gibes are not cheap and unworthy of truth, but, apart from that, where there is a chance of using them skilfully it is our duty to do so.' Do you not find, Fathers, that this passage is very relevant to our subject? 'What I have done is only sport before a real attack.' So far I have only been playing, 'showing you what wounds can be inflicted on you rather than actually inflict them.' I have simply displayed your texts with hardly a moment's thought. 'If this has provoked laughter it is because the subjects themselves invited it.' For what could be more likely to provoke laughter than the spectacle of something so grave as Christian ethics full of fantasies as grotesque as yours? We have such high expectations of these precepts, reputedly 'revealed by Jesus Christ himself to Fathers of the Society', that when we find there 'that a priest who has accepted money to say a mass may, in addition, take money from other persons, surrendering to them his entire share in the sacrifice; that a religious is not excommunicated for leaving off his habit, if he does so in order to go dancing, stealing or incognito to places of sin; and that the obligation of hearing mass may be satisfied by hearing four quarter masses said simultaneously by different priests'; when, as I say, we hear such decisions and others like them, we cannot help laughing at something so surprising, because nothing provokes laughter more than surprise at the discrepancy between expectation and reality. And how else could most of these matters have been treated, since 'it would lend them some authority if they were treated seriously', according to Tertullian?

What? Is there any need to bring Scripture and tradition to bear in order to show that it is treachery to kill an enemy by running him through from behind, or in ambush; and that it is buying a benefice to give someone money as an inducement to resign it in one's favour? These then are matters which must be

treated with contempt and 'which deserve to be ridiculed and mocked'. In brief, what this ancient author says about 'vanity calling for nothing but derision', and the rest of his words, applies here so relevantly and conclusively that it is no longer open to doubt that one may laugh at errors without offending propriety.

And let me tell you, Fathers, also that one may laugh at them without offending against charity, although this is another of the charges you bring against me in your writings. 'For charity sometimes obliges us to laugh at men's errors so as to bring them to laugh too and avoid them,' according to these words of St Augustine: '*Haec tu misericorditer irride, ut eis ridenda ac fugienda commendes.*' The same charity often obliges us to reject them indignantly, according to these words of St Gregory Nazianzen: 'The spirit of charity and kindness is capable of emotion and anger.' Indeed, as St Augustine says: 'Who would dare to say that truth must remain unarmed against falsehood, and that the enemies of the faith shall be allowed to dismay the faithful with strong words, and to delight them with agreeable witticisms; but that the style of Catholic writers must be dull enough to send their readers to sleep?'

Is it not obvious that by such behaviour we should admit into the Church the most extravagant and pernicious errors, without being allowed to deride them with contempt, lest we be accused of offending propriety, or to refute them vehemently, lest we be accused of lack of charity?

Come now, Fathers, are you to be allowed to say that 'one may kill to avoid being slapped or insulted', and is nobody to be allowed to refute publicly a public error of such importance? Are you to be free to say that 'a judge may in conscience retain what he has received for committing an injustice', while no one is free to challenge you? Are you to print, with a privilege and the approval of your doctors, that 'one can be saved without ever having loved God', and then muzzle those who defend the truth of the faith by telling them that it is an offence against

brotherly love to attack you and an offence against Christian morality to laugh at your precepts? I rather doubt, Fathers, whether you could get anyone to believe this. But all the same, if anyone were convinced, and believed that I have offended against the love I owe you by disparaging your moral teaching, I would like them to examine carefully what first prompted them to take this view. For even if they imagine that it comes from a zeal such that they cannot help being scandalized when they see their neighbour accused, I would beg them to consider that another explanation is not impossible; and that it is even quite likely that it derives from the secret distaste, often unknown to ourselves, which our fundamental wickedness invariably arouses against opponents of lax morality. To give them a criterion for ascertaining its real origin, I would ask them whether at the same time that they protest at such treatment of religious, they protest still more at such treatment of the truth by religious? If they are angry not only at my *Letters* but even more at the precepts quoted in them I will admit that their resentment may well be prompted by a certain zeal, though hardly an enlightened one, in which case the passages quoted here will be enough to enlighten them. But if they are furious only at the criticism and not at the things criticized, truly, Fathers, I shall always feel bound to say that they are grossly mistaken and that their zeal is blind.

Strange zeal, which is angered at those who denounce public faults and not those who commit them! Novel charity which takes offence at the sight of manifest errors confounded by mere disclosure, and not at that of morality overthrown by such errors! If these people were in danger of being murdered, would they take offence at warning of the ambush laid for them; and instead of making a detour to avoid it, would they waste time complaining about the uncharitable behaviour of those who revealed the criminal designs of the murderers? Do they lose their temper when told not to eat some food because it is poisoned, or to keep out of some town where there is plague?

Why then do they consider it uncharitable to reveal precepts harmful to religion, and on the other hand would think it uncharitable not to reveal things harmful to health and life, unless it is because they are so fond of life that they welcome anything which contributes to its preservation, and are so indifferent to truth that not only do they take no part in its defence, but are even sorry to see any attempt to destroy falsehood?

Let them therefore consider before God how shameful and pernicious for the Church is the moral teaching spread far and wide by your casuists; how scandalous and excessive the moral licence which they have introduced; how obstinate and violent the effrontery you bring to their support. And if they do not think it time to rise against such disorders they are as much to be pitied in their blindness as you, Fathers, since both of you have equal reason to fear St Augustine's comment on Our Lord's words in the Gospel: 'Woe unto the blind who lead! Woe unto the blind who are led! *Vae caecis ducentibus! Vae caecis sequentibus!*'

But so that you should have no further cause to convey such impressions to others, or form them yourselves, I shall tell you Fathers (and I am embarrassed at being obliged to tell you what you ought to tell me), I shall tell you the criteria which the Fathers of the Church have given us for judging whether criticism derives from a spirit of piety and charity, or from a spirit of impiety and hatred.

The first of these rules is that the spirit of piety always leads us to speak with truth and sincerity, whereas envy and hatred employ falsehood and slander: '*splendentia et vehementia, sed rebus veris*', says St Augustine. Anyone who resorts to falsehood is acting in the spirit of the devil. No amount of directing the intention can justify slander; and even if it were a question of converting the whole world, it would never be permissible to traduce innocent persons, because we should not commit the least evil to promote the greatest good, and 'the truth of the

Lord hath no need of our lies', according to Scripture. 'It is the duty of those who defend truth,' says St Hilary, 'to advance only those things that are true.' So, Fathers, I can say before God that I detest nothing so much as the slightest injury to truth, and that I have always been particularly careful not only not to falsify, which would be repugnant, but not to alter or in the least way distort the sense of any passage. So much so, that if in this connexion I dared to use the words of the same St Hilary, I might very well say to you, with him: 'If we say anything untrue, may our words be treated as infamous; but if we show that the things we produce are public and manifest, it is not inconsistent with moderation and apostolic liberty to denounce them.'

But it is not enough, Fathers, to speak nothing but the truth, we must also not speak the whole truth, because we ought to bring up only those things which it is useful to reveal, and not those which could only cause pain without doing any good. As the first rule is to speak truthfully, the second then is to speak discreetly. 'The wicked,' says St Augustine, 'persecute the good, blindly following their driving passion; whereas the good persecute the wicked with wise discretion: in the same way as surgeons consider what they are cutting, whereas murderers do not heed where they strike.' You know very well, Fathers, that I have not quoted those precepts of your authors which might have hurt you most, although I might well have done so, even without sinning against discretion any more than the learned and very Catholic men who have done so in the past. All who have read your authors know as well as you do how I have spared you in this respect, apart from the fact that I have not said a word against what concerns each of you individually; and I should regret having referred to private and personal faults, whatever proof I had had. For I know that this is characteristic of hatred and animosity and should never be done unless the good of the Church urgently requires it. It is obvious then that I have shown no lack of discretion in what I

have been obliged to say concerning your moral precepts, and you have more cause to applaud my restraint than complain of my indiscretion.

The third rule, Fathers, is that when one is obliged to resort to satire, the spirit of piety leads one to use it only against errors, and not against sacred things; whereas the spirit of buffoonery, impiety and heresy laughs at what is most holy. I have already justified myself on that score. There is little enough danger of being exposed to this vice for anyone concerned only with discussing the opinions I have quoted from your authors.

Finally, Fathers, to cut these rules short, I will tell you just one more, the beginning and end of all the others. It is that the spirit of charity inspires a hearty desire for the salvation of those whom we attack, and makes us pray to God even while we rebuke men. 'We must always,' says St Augustine, 'keep charity in our hearts, even when we are obliged to do outward things which seem harsh to men, and to strike them with rough but salutary severity; for their profit must come before their pleasure.' I believe, Fathers, that there is nothing in my *Letters* to indicate that I have not desired your salvation; and so charity obliges you to believe that I have really done so, in the absence of any sign to the contrary. It is therefore obvious that you cannot prove that I have sinned against this rule, or against any of the others which charity obliges us to follow; and that is why you have no right to say that I have offended against charity in what I have done.

But if you would now like the pleasure of seeing briefly a few examples of conduct which breaks each of these rules, and really is stamped with the spirit of buffoonery, envy and hatred, I will give you some. To ensure that you are quite familiar with them, I shall take them from your own writings.

To begin with the unworthy way in which your authors speak of sacred things, whether in their attempts at satire or gallantry, or in their serious discourses, do you think that the

many absurd tales of your Father Binet, in his *Consolation of the Sick*, conform very closely to his intention of offering Christian consolation to those whom God afflicts? Would you say that the profane and frivolous way in which your Father Le Moyne speaks of piety in his *Easy Piety* is more likely to inspire respect or scorn for his idea of Christian virtue? Is there a breath of anything in his book *Moral Pictures*, in prose or verse, but a spirit full of the vanities and follies of the world? Is this ode worthy of a priest which we find in his seventh book under the title 'Praise of modesty, in which it is shown that all beautiful things are red, or liable to go red'? He wrote it to console a lady, whom he calls Delphinia, for the fact that she blushed very easily. Thus in every stanza he says that some of the most estimable things are red, like roses, pomegranates, the mouth, the tongue; and among such gallantries, disgraceful in a religious, he dares to include the blessed spirits who attend God, and of whom Christians ought only to speak with veneration.

The Cherubims above the skies,
  Of head and feathers only framed,
  Who by God's spirit are inflamed,
Enlightened by his radiant eyes,
These glorious flying faces spread
A beauty ever glowing red,
  Or with their own or with God's fire;
And midst these mutual fervours they
Move their wings gently to allay
  And fan the ardour they acquire:
But redness is in thee displayed,
  Delphinia with far greater grace
  For honour dwells upon thy face
In purple like a king arrayed.

What do you say to that, Fathers? To prefer Delphinia's blushes to the ardour of spirits who are inflamed by charity

alone; to compare a fan with these mystic wings, does this seem to you very Christian, coming from lips which consecrate the blessed body of Jesus Christ? I know that he only said it in gallantry and for fun; but that is what is called laughing at sacred things. Is it not true that if he were brought to justice he would not escape censure, even though he adduced in his own defence the argument, no less worthy of censure itself, quoted in his first book: 'That the Sorbonne has no jurisdiction over Parnassus, and that the errors of that land are subject neither to censure nor inquisition', as if it were only forbidden to be blasphemous and impious in prose? But at least this would not prevent the censure of another passage from the preface of the same book: 'That the water of the river on whose banks he composed his verse is so good at producing poets that, even if it were blessed and turned into holy water, it would not exorcize the demon of poetry'; nor this one from your Father Garasse in his *Compendium of the principal truths of religion*, p. 649, where he combines blasphemy and heresy, speaking as follows of the sacred mystery of the Incarnation: 'Human personality was as it were grafted or mounted on the personality of the Word'; and this other passage from the same author, p. 510, not to speak of many more, where, referring to the name of Jesus, usually shown thus IH̊S, he says 'that some people have removed the cross and just taken the letters like this, IHS, which is a Jesus robbed of his baggage.'

That is how unworthily you treat the truths of religion, against the inviolable obligation to speak of them with reverence. But you sin no less against the obligation to speak truthfully and discreetly. What is commoner in your writings than slander? Are those of Father Brisacier sincere? And is he telling the truth when he says, part 4, pp. 24–5, that the nuns of Port-Royal do not pray to the saints and have no images in their church? Are these not brazen lies when the contrary is there for all Paris to see? And is he speaking discreetly when he besmirches the innocence of these women, whose life is so

pure and austere, when he calls them 'impenitent women, doing without sacraments or communion, foolish virgins, fantastical, desperate, Callaghanites,* whatever you like;' and traduces them with many other malicious slanders, which have earned censure from the late Archbishop of Paris? When he slanders priests of irreproachable life, going so far as to say (part 1, p. 22): 'That they practise novelties in confession to ensnare beautiful and innocent women; and that he would shrink from relating the horrible crimes they commit?' Is it not intolerably reckless to put about such foul lies, not only without proof, but without the smallest shadow or suggestion of proof? I will dwell no longer on that subject, and will defer until later discussing it with you at length; for I have something to say to you on this matter, and what I have already said is enough to show you how you sin at once against truth and discretion.

But it may be said that you do at least not sin against the last obligation, that of desiring the salvation of those whom we decry, and that no one could accuse you of that without forcing the secret of your hearts, known to God alone. Strangely enough, Fathers, there is all the same enough here to convict you; for led by hatred of your opponents even to desire their eternal damnation, you have been blind enough to disclose this abominable desire; far from wishing secretly for their salvation, you have prayed publicly for their damnation; and after revealing this lamentable desire at Caen, to the scandal of the whole Church, you have subsequently dared to defend so diabolical an action in Paris, in your printed books. Nothing could surpass such extremes of impiety. To mock and speak unworthily of the most sacred things; to slander priests and virgins falsely and scandalously; finally to hope and pray for their damnation. I do not know, Fathers, how you can fail to be embarrassed, or how you can have thought of accusing me of lack of charity. I who have only spoken with truth and restraint,

* Callaghan was a Jansenist of Irish origin.

without considering how abominably you yourselves have offended charity by such deplorable excesses.

Finally, Fathers, to conclude with another charge laid against me, you complain that among numerous precepts which I quote from you, a few have been the subject of previous objections made against you, and that 'I am thus repeating previous objections.' I would reply that it is just because you have not profited from hearing it before that I am saying it again. For what good has it done for learned doctors and the whole University to criticize you in so many books? Have your Fathers Annat, Caussin, Pintereau, and Le Moyne in their replies done anything but insult those who gave them such salutary advice? Have you suppressed the books in which these evil precepts are taught? Have you silenced their authors? Have you become more circumspect? Is it not since then that Escobar has been so frequently reprinted in the Low Countries and France, and that your Fathers Cellot, Bagot, Bauny, L'Amy, Le Moyne and others have gone on publishing the same things day after day, even adding new ones more immoral than before? So stop complaining, Fathers, that I have criticized precepts you have never given up, or that I have objected to new ones, or that I have laughed at them all. You have only to look at them to confound yourselves and justify me. Could anyone see Father Bauny's decision on the man who burns down a barn and not laugh at it? or Father Cellot's on making restitution? or Sanchez's ruling in favour of sorcerers? or Hurtado's method of avoiding the sin of duelling by walking about in a field and waiting for someone? or Father Bauny's exchange of compliments for avoiding usury? The method of avoiding simony by directing the intention, of avoiding a lie by alternately speaking aloud and under one's breath, and the rest of the opinions of your gravest doctors? Do I need any more justification, Fathers? And do these 'vain and feeble opinions call for anything but derision', according to Tertullian? But, Fathers, the moral corruption brought about by your pre-

cepts deserves further consideration, and we may well join the same Tertullian in asking: 'Shall I laugh at their folly or deplore their blindness? *Rideam vanitatem, an exprobem caecitatem?*' I believe, Fathers, that 'one can choose whether to laugh or weep': '*Haec tolerabilius vel ridentur vel flentur*,' says St Augustine. Admit then that 'there is a time for laughter and a time for tears,' according to Scripture [Eccl. III. 4]. I do not wish, Fathers, to experience in you the truth of these words from Proverbs: 'Some are so unreasonable that one can never have any satisfaction from them, however they are treated, whether one laughs or rages.'*

As I finished this letter I saw a publication of yours in which you accuse me of imposture in respect of six of your precepts which I quoted, and of being in league with heretics; I hope that you will shortly be seeing a precise answer to this, Fathers, as a result of which I doubt whether you will want to go on making that sort of charge.

* cf. Prov. XXIX, 9.

TWELFTH LETTER WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS TO A PROVINCIAL TO THE REVEREND JESUIT FATHERS

9 Sep. 1656

REVEREND FATHERS,

I was all ready to write to you about the insults of which I have for so long been the object in your writings, where you describe me as 'impious, buffoon, ignoramus, clown, impostor, slanderer, rogue, heretic, crypto-Calvinist, disciple of Du Moulin,* possessed by a legion of devils' and whatever else you like. I wanted to say why you treat me like this, for I should be very upset if people believed such things of me; and I had made up my mind to protest at your slanders and impostures, when I saw your answers, which accuse me of just these things. You thus oblige me to change my plan; I shall however, Fathers, carry on with it to some extent, since I hope by my own defence to convict you of more real impostures than you impute false ones to me. Indeed, Fathers, you are much more open to suspicion on that score than I; for it is not likely that, alone as I am, with no power or human assistance against so great a body, sustained only by truth and sincerity, I should risk total disaster by exposing myself to conviction as an impostor. It is too easy to discover falsehoods in questions of fact like these. I would not want for accusers, and they would not be refused justice. This is not the case with you, Fathers; you can say what you like about me and I have nowhere to lodge a complaint. Given such a difference in our situations, I have to be extremely guarded, even if there were no other considerations obliging me to be so. You treat me, though, as a blatant impostor, and thus oblige me to reply: but you know that this must entail fresh disclosures, and even more fundamental revelations about your moral teaching; I doubt

* Protestant minister of Charenton.

whether these are good tactics on your part. It carries the war into your own camp, and at your own expense; though by confusing the issues with scholastic terms you reckoned to make the answers so long, obscure and tedious that people would lose interest, this may not be quite the case. I shall try to bore you as little as this sort of writing permits. Your precepts have a certain value as entertainment which people always enjoy. But just remember that it is you who compel me to clarify things, and let us see who will come off best.

The first of your impostures is on 'Vasquez' opinion regarding almsgiving'. Allow me therefore to explain it clearly, in order to remove all obscurity from our debates. Most people know, Fathers, that according to the spirit of the Church there are two precepts regarding alms: one 'to give from one's superfluous wealth to relieve the ordinary needs of the poor'; the other 'to give even from what is necessary, according to one's situation, in cases of extreme need.' Cajetan says this, following St Thomas; thus in order to explain Vasquez's views on alms, we must show how he determines the amount to be given both from what is superfluous and from what is necessary.

Alms given from superfluous wealth, which constitute the commonest relief of the poor, are completely abolished by this one precept from *Alms*, ch. iv, n. 14, which I quoted in my *Letters*: 'What persons in high society retain in order to improve their status and that of their relatives is not called superfluous. Thus it will be hard to find superfluity among persons in high society, or even kings.' You can see, Fathers, from this definition that anyone with ambition will have no superfluity, and this does away with almsgiving as far as most people are concerned. But even if someone did happen to have some superfluous wealth, he would be dispensed from giving any of it away in cases of ordinary need, according to Vasquez, who dissents from those who want to impose this obligation on the rich. Here are his terms, ch. i, n. 32: 'Corduba,' he says,

'teaches that anyone with superfluous wealth is obliged to give at least some of it to those in ordinary need, in order to fulfil the commandment to some extent: BUT I DO NOT AGREE: *SED HOC NON PLACET:* FOR WE HAVE PROVED THE CONTRARY against Cajetan and Navarre.' Thus, Fathers, this obligation to give alms is absolutely cancelled, according to Vasquez's pleasure.

As regards giving alms from what is necessary, which is obligatory in cases of extreme and urgent need, you will see, from the conditions that he attaches to this obligation, that the richest people in Paris need never in their lives be bound by it. I will only quote two. One: 'that IT MUST BE CERTAIN that the poor person will receive help from no one else: *haec intelligo et caetera omnia quando SCIO nullum alium opem laturum*', ch. i, n. 28. What do you say to that, Fathers? How often will it happen that in Paris, where there are so many charitable people, we can be certain that no one will turn up to help the poor man with whom we are confronted? Yet, if we do not know this, we can send him away without any help, according to Vasquez. The other condition is that the need of the poor person must be such 'that he is threatened with some fatal accident, or loss of reputation', nn. 24 and 26. Which is rather rare. But what further emphasizes the rarity is that he says, n. 45, that a poor person who is in such a state that we are obliged to give him alms 'may in conscience rob the rich'.

So this must be very much out of the ordinary, unless he means that it is normally lawful to steal. Thus after cancelling any obligation to give alms from what is superfluous, the main source of charity, he obliges the rich to assist the poor out of what is necessary only when he allows the poor to rob the rich. That is Vasquez's doctrine, to which you refer readers for their edification.

I now come to your impostures. First you dwell at length on the obligation to give alms, which Vasquez impo·es on eccle-

siastics; but I did not mention it, and will do so whenever you like. So there is no question of that here. Regarding laymen, who alone are at issue, you seem to have tried to give the impression that in the passage I quoted Vasquez is only giving Cajetan's opinion and not his own. But as nothing could be further from the truth, and as you did not say this clearly, for the sake of your honour I am willing to believe that you did not mean it.

Then you protest loudly that after quoting Vasquez's precept: 'It will hardly ever be found that people in society, or even kings, have any superfluity', I conclude 'that the rich are therefore scarcely ever obliged to give alms from their superfluity.' But what do you mean to say, Fathers? If it is true that the rich almost never have any superfluity, is it not certain that they will almost never be obliged to give alms from it? I should provide you with a reasoned argument, if Diana, who thinks so highly of Vasquez and calls him 'the phoenix of spirits', had not drawn the same conclusions from the same principle; for after quoting this precept of Vasquez, he concludes: 'on the question of whether the rich are obliged to give alms from their superfluity, though the opinion which obliges them to do so is correct, it would never, or hardly ever, happen that it becomes obligatory in practice.' I have simply followed the whole argument word for word. What then does this mean, Fathers? When Diana quotes Vasquez's views with warm approval, when he finds them probable, 'and very convenient for the rich', as he says in the same place, he is guilty neither of slander, nor falsification, and you do not complain that he puts words into Vasquez's mouth; whereas when I represent these same views of Vasquez, but without calling him a phoenix, I am an impostor, falsifying and corrupting his precepts. You have good reason to fear, Fathers, that by according different treatment to those who are no different in the way they quote your doctrine, but only in their assessment of it, you may reveal your innermost hearts and lead people to surmise that you are

chiefly concerned to maintain the credit and prestige of your Company. As long as your accommodating theology is regarded as making wise concessions, you do not disavow those who publish it, but on the contrary praise them for contributing to your designs; but when it is regarded as perniciously lax, this same interest of your Society compels you to disavow precepts which do you public harm. Thus you acknowledge or disown them not in accordance with the truth, which never changes, but in accordance with changing times, following this ancient saying: 'Everything for the times, nothing for the truth.' Watch out, Fathers; and to stop you accusing me of drawing conclusions from Vasquez's principles which he would have disowned, let me tell you that he drew them himself, ch. i, n. 27: 'There is hardly any obligation to give alms if one is only obliged to give from one's superfluity, according to Cajetan's opinion and MY OWN, *Et secundum nostram.*' Admit then, Fathers, on the evidence of Vasquez himself, that I have followed his views exactly, and ask yourselves with what sort of conscience you dared to say that 'anyone checking the source would be amazed to find that he teaches just the opposite'.

Lastly you emphasize above all that Vasquez compensates by putting the rich under an obligation to give alms 'from what is necessary'. But you forgot to indicate the combination of circumstances required to constitute this obligation, and you say in general terms that he obliges the rich to give away even what is required by their position. This is overdoing it, Fathers; the Gospel rule does not go as far as that: this would be another error, and Vasquez comes nowhere near it. To conceal his laxity you attribute to him a rigour so excessive as to be blameworthy, and thus lose all credit for quoting him faithfully. But he does not deserve the blame, after establishing, as he has by an obvious reversal of the Gospel, that the rich are obliged neither by justice nor charity to give from their superfluity, let alone from what is necessary, to relieve the normal needs of the poor; and that they are only obliged to give from

what is necessary on occasions so rare as hardly ever to arise.

You make no further objections against me, so that it only remains for me to show how false is your claim that Vasquez is stricter than Cajetan. That will be easy enough, since that cardinal teaches: 'we are obliged by justice to give alms from our superfluity, even in cases of ordinary need; because, according to the Fathers, the rich are merely stewards of their superfluity, so that they may give it to whichever needy persons they choose.' Thus, while Diana says of Vasquez's precepts 'that they will be very convenient and agreeable to the rich and their confessors', this cardinal, who has no such consolation to offer them, declares, *On Almsgiving*, ch. vi: 'That all he has to say to the rich are these words of Jesus Christ: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God",* and to their confessors these other words of Our Saviour: "If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch",'† so indispensable did he regard this obligation! This is likewise what the Fathers and all the saints have established as an absolute truth. St Thomas 2.2., q. 118, c. 4, says: 'there are two cases where we are obliged to give alms as a legal duty, *ex debito legali*: one, when the poor are in danger, the other when we have superfluous wealth.' q. 87, a. 1: 'The third tithes which the Jews had to eat with the poor have been increased in the new law, because Jesus Christ bids us give to the poor not only a tenth part, but all of our superfluous wealth.' Yet Vasquez does not agree that we are obliged to give any of it, so considerate is he towards the rich, harsh towards the poor, opposed to those charitable sentiments which gladly accept the truth of St Gregory's words, hard as it seems to the rich of this world: 'When we give to the poor what they need we do not so much give what is ours as restore to them what is theirs; and it is a legal obligation rather than a work of mercy.'

Thus the saints recommend the rich to share worldly goods with the poor if they want to enjoy heavenly ones with them.

* Matt. xix, 24. † Matt. xv, 14.

Whereas you strive to preserve men's ambition, which leaves them no superfluity, and avarice, which grudges giving any there might be, the saints have on the contrary striven to induce them to give away their superfluity and to make them realize that it will be considerable if measured not by cupidity, which knows no bounds, but by piety, which is resourceful in self-denial so as to have the more scope for practising charity. 'We shall have much that is superfluous,' says St Augustine, 'if we keep only what we need, but if we seek after vanity nothing will suffice. Seek, brethren, for what is sufficient for God's work,' that is nature, 'and not what is sufficient for cupidity,' which is the work of the devil; 'and remember that what is superfluous to the rich is necessary for the poor.'

I wish, Fathers, that my words might serve not merely to justify me, a small matter, but also to make you realize and detest what is corrupt in your casuists' precepts, so that we might be united in the holy rules of the Gospel by which we must all be judged.

On the second point, regarding simony, before replying to your criticisms, I shall begin by clarifying your teaching on the subject. Finding yourselves caught between the Church's canons, which impose terrible penalties on simonists, and the avarice of so many people who pursue this infamous trade, you have followed your usual method, which is to grant men their desires and fob God off with words and appearances. For what do simonists want but to make money by disposing of benefices? And this is what you have cleared of simony. But since the name of simony must remain and be attached to some subject or other, you have chosen for this purpose an imaginary idea which never occurs to simonists, and which would be of no interest to them, namely to value the money, considered in itself, as highly as the spiritual good, considered in itself. For who would ever dream of comparing things so disproportionate and different in kind? Yet so long as one does not draw this metaphysical comparison, one can give a benefice to

someone else and take money for it without simony, according to your authors.

In this way you make a joke of religion in order to gratify men's passions; but just look how gravely your Father Valentia retails his fantasies in the passage quoted in my *Letters*, vol. III, disp. 16, part 3, p. 2044. 'There are two ways,' he says, 'of giving a temporal good for a spiritual one: one by valuing the temporal more highly than the spiritual, which would be simony; the other by taking the temporal as the motive and end leading to conferment of the spiritual, without, however, valuing the temporal above the spiritual, in which case it would not be simony. This is because simony consists in getting something temporal as a fair price for something spiritual. Thus if someone demands the temporal, *si petatur temporale*, not as the price, but as the motive determining conferment, it is not simony at all, even though his chief aim and expectation is the possession of the temporal: *minime erit simonia, etiam si temporale principaliter intendatur et expectetur.*' Did not your great Sanchez enjoy similar revelation, according to Escobar, tr. 6, ex. 2, n. 40? Here are his words: 'If one gives a temporal good for a spiritual, not as a PRICE but as a MOTIVE to induce the patron to give, or in gratitude at having already received it, is this simony? Sanchez asserts that it is not.' Your Caen theses of 1644: 'It is a probable opinion, taught by a number of Catholics, that it is not simony to give a temporal good for a spiritual one, when it is not given as a price.' As for Tannerus, here is his doctrine, just like Valentia's, which will show you how wrong you were to protest when I said that it is not in accordance with that of St Thomas, for he admits this himself in the passage quoted in my *Letters*, vol. III, disp. 5, p. 1519: 'Properly and correctly speaking,' he says, 'it is simony only when a temporal good is received as the price of a spiritual; but when money is received as a motive inducing one to give the spiritual or in gratitude for having given it, this is not simony, at least in conscience.' A little later: 'The same

applies even if one regards the temporal as one's chief aim, and prefers it to the spiritual; although St Thomas and others appear to say the opposite in asserting that it is definitely simony to give a spiritual for a temporal good, when the temporal is the end in view.'

That, Fathers, is your doctrine of simony as taught by your best authors, who in this follow each other closely. Thus it only remains for me to answer your impostures. You said nothing about Valentia's opinion, and so his doctrine still holds good after your answer. You dwell, however, on that of Tannerus, saying that he merely decided that it was not simony by divine law, and you allege that I suppressed the words 'by divine law' from this passage. You are unreasonable, Fathers; for the phrase 'by divine law' was never there. You then add that Tannerus declares that it is simony 'by positive law'. You are mistaken, Fathers; he never said so in general, but in specific cases, '*in casibus a jure expressis*', as he says at this point. In this he is making an exception to what he had established in general in this passage: 'that it is not simony in conscience'; which implies that it is not simony by positive law either, unless you want to make Tannerus out to be so impious as to maintain that simony by positive law is not simony in conscience. But you deliberately seek out words like 'divine law, positive law, natural law, inner and outward tribunals, cases specified by law, external presumption' and other unfamiliar ones, in order to escape behind such obscurity and hide your aberrations out of sight. All the same, Fathers, you will not escape by such vain subtleties, for I shall ask you such simple questions as will not permit of scholastic distinctions.

I ask you, then, without speaking of 'positive law or presumption of outward tribunals', whether the holder of a benefice is guilty of simony, according to your authors, if he disposes of a benefice worth 4,000 *livres* a year and receives 10,000 *francs* cash, not as the price of the benefice, but as a motive inducing him to give it. Give me a straight answer,

Fathers; what must we conclude about this case, according to your authors? Will Tannerus not formally assert: 'That it is not simony in conscience since the temporal is not the price of the benefice, but only the motive inducing the holder to give it'? Will not Valentia, your Caen theses, Sanchez and Escobar decide likewise 'that it is not simony', for the same reason? Is anything more needed to acquit this benefice-holder from simony? And will you dare treat him otherwise in your confessionals, whatever view you may take yourselves, since he would be entitled to demand it of you, acting as he did according to the opinion of so many grave doctors? Admit then that such a benefice-holder is not guilty of simony, according to you; and now defend this doctrine if you can.

This, Fathers, is the way to treat questions if you want to resolve them instead of confusing them, either by technical terms, or by changing the nature of the question, as you do in your last charge, as follows. Tannerus, you say, at least asserts that such a transaction is gravely sinful; and you criticize me for maliciously suppressing this circumstance 'which entirely justifies him', in your submission. But you are wrong, and on several grounds. For even if what you say were correct, there was no question, in the passage where I discussed it, of deciding whether it was sinful, but only whether it was simony. Now these are quite distinct questions: sins only carry the obligation of confession, according to your precepts; simony that of restitution: some people would consider this rather different. For you have devised plenty of expedients for making confession easy, whereas you have found none for making restitution pleasant. I would add that that case which Tannerus calls sinful is not simply where a spiritual good is given for a temporal, which indeed provides the chief motive, but he adds further 'that the temporal is valued more highly than the spiritual', which is the imaginary case mentioned earlier. He is not wrong to condemn this as sinful, since it would take great wickedness or great stupidity not to want to avoid a sin by

such an easy method as abstaining from any comparison between the values of these two things, when it is allowed to give one for the other. Besides, Valentia, examining in the passage already quoted whether it is a sin to give a spiritual for a temporal good, which provides the motive, quotes the arguments of those who say it is and adds: '*Sed hoc non videtur mihi satis certum:* that does not seem to me sufficiently certain.'

Since then, however, your Father Erade Bille, professor of casuistry at Caen, has decided that it is not a sin at all; for probable opinions go on ripening. He declares this in his writings of 1644, against which Monsieur du Pré, doctor and professor at Caen, composed the fine printed oration which enjoys some celebrity. For though this Father Erade Bille acknowledges that Valentia's doctrine, followed by Father Milhard and condemned by the Sorbonne, 'is contrary to the general view, open on several grounds to suspicion of simony, and punished by law when shown to be practised', he still says that it is a probable opinion, and consequently safe in conscience, and that it involves neither simony nor sin. 'It is,' he says, 'a probable opinion, taught by many Catholic doctors, that there is no simony, and NO SIN in giving money, or some other temporal thing, for a benefice, either to show gratitude, or as an inducement without which it would not be given, so long as it is not given as a price equivalent to the benefice.' That is all one could ask for. According to all these precepts, you can see, Fathers, that simony would be so rare that it could not even apply to Simon Magus, who tried to buy the Holy Spirit, and thus symbolizes the simonists who buy; or Gehazi, who accepted money for a miracle, and symbolizes the simonists who sell. For there is no doubt that when Simon, in Acts, [VIII. 18] 'offered the apostles money; saying, Give me this power,' he mentioned neither buying, selling nor price, and merely offered money as an inducement for them to give him this spiritual good. Being innocent of simony in this, according to your authors, he would have been quite safe from St Peter's

anathema if he had known their precepts. This ignorance did Gehazi a lot of harm too, when Elisha struck him with leprosy. He only took money from the miraculously cured prince as a token of gratitude, and not as a price equivalent to the divine virtue which effected this miracle. Thus he could have obliged Elisha to cure him, on pain of mortal sin, because he was acting in accordance with so many grave doctors and your confessors are obliged to absolve their penitents in such cases, washing away their spiritual leprosy, of which bodily leprosy is only a symbol.

Seriously, Fathers, it would be easy to make a laughing-stock of you on this point; I do not know why you lay yourselves open to it. For I would only have to quote your other precepts, like this one from Escobar in the *Practice of simony according to the Society of Jesus*: 'Is it simony when two religious come to a mutual understanding on these lines: Vote for me to be elected provincial, and I will vote for you to be elected prior! Not at all.' And this one: 'It is not simony to get someone to give you a benefice by promising money, if you have no real intention of paying; because this is only simulated simony, and is no more genuine than counterfeit gold is real gold.' Such subtlety of conscience has enabled him, by joining fraud to simony, to devise means for procuring benefices without money and without simony. But I have no time to go into this further, for I must think about defending myself against your third slander regarding bankrupts.

As for this, Fathers, nothing could be cruder. You accuse me of imposture concerning an opinion of Lessius, which I did not quote on my own account but which is adduced by Escobar, in a passage I quote from him; so even if it were true that Lessius did not hold the view that Escobar attributed to him, what could be more unjust than taking me to task for it? When I quote Lessius and your other authors on my own account I willingly accept the responsibility. But since Escobar collected the opinions of 24 of your Fathers, I ask you, do I

have to guarantee anything but what I quote from him, or must I also answer for his own quotations in the passages taken from him? That would be unreasonable. Now this is what is at issue. In my *Letters* I quoted the passage from Escobar, very faithfully translated, and on which you do not comment: 'May a declared bankrupt in safety of conscience retain as much of his assets as is necessary for a decent living, *ne indecore vivat?* I MAINTAIN WITH LESSIUS THAT HE MAY. *CUM LESSIO ASSERO POSSE* etc.' Thereupon you tell me that this is not Lessius's view. But just think what you are committing yourselves to. For if it really is his view, you will be accused of imposture for asserting the contrary; if it is not, Escobar is the impostor; so that it necessarily follows that someone in your Society is accused of imposture. What a scandal! You are no good at anticipating consequences. You think you have only to throw insults about without a care for where they will fall. Why did you not let Escobar know your difficulty before publishing it? He would have given you satisfaction. It is not so hard to get news from Valladolid, where he enjoys perfect health and is completing his great *Moral Theology* in six volumes, on the first of which I may one day have something to say to you. The first ten *Letters* were sent to him; you could have sent him your objections as well, and I am sure he would have answered, for he has surely seen the passage in Lessius from which he took his '*ne indecore vivat*'. Have a good look, Fathers, and you will find it there just as I did, book 2, ch. xvi, n. 45: '*The same thing clearly follows from the laws quoted, especially regarding the assets he acquires after surrender* [*to his creditors*], *of which even a criminal debtor may retain as much as is necessary to enjoy a decent living according to his position. You ask whether the laws permit this in respect of assets held at the moment of surrender? This seems to follow from Doctors . . .*'

I will spend no more time showing you that Lessius, in order to find authority for this precept, abuses the law which grants bankrupts only a bare livelihood and not honourable subsis-

tence. It is enough to have justified Escobar against such an accusation, and this is doing more than I had to. But you, Fathers, do not do what you should; for it is a question of replying to the passage of Escobar, whose decisions are convenient, because being independent of what precedes or follows, and consisting entirely of brief articles, they are not subject to your distinctions. I quoted his whole passage, which permits: 'those who surrender to their creditors to retain enough of their assets, although illegally acquired, to give their families a decent living.' At which I exclaimed in my *Letters*: 'How is that, Fathers? By what strange charity do you prefer these assets to belong to those who acquired them wrongfully rather than to lawful creditors?' That is the question that has to be answered, but it puts you in an extremely awkward position, from which you vainly try to extricate yourselves by turning the question and quoting other passages from Lessius which are quite irrelevant. I ask you then whether this passage of Escobar can be followed in conscience by those who go bankrupt. Now be careful what you say: if you answer no, what will become of your doctor and your doctrine of probability? And if you say yes, I refer you to the High Court [Parlement].

I leave you in this painful dilemma, Fathers, for I have no more space here to deal with the next imposture concerning Lessius's passage on homicide; that will be for next time, and the rest later.

Meanwhile I shall say nothing about the *Notes*, full of scandalous falsehoods, with which you conclude each imposture: I shall answer all that in the *Letter* where I hope to show the source of your slanders. I pity you, Fathers, for resorting to such remedies. Your insults will not clear up our differences and your various threats will not stop me defending myself. You think you have power and impunity on your side, but I think I have truth and innocence on mine. It is a long strange war when violence tries to suppress truth. All the efforts of

violence cannot weaken truth, and only serve to reinforce it. All the enlightenment of truth can do nothing to halt violence and only exasperates it more. When power fights power, the greater destroys the less: when argument is set against argument, those which are true and convincing confound and disperse those which are only vanity and lies; but violence and truth have no power over each other. Let no one claim, however, that they are equal; for there is the enormous difference that the course of violence is limited by the decree of God, who applies its effects to the glory of the truth it attacks, whereas truth exists eternally and finally triumphs over its enemies, because it is eternal and mighty as God himself.

THIRTEENTH LETTER WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS TO A PROVINCIAL TO THE REVEREND JESUIT FATHERS

30 Sep. 1656

Reverend Fathers,

I have just seen your latest publication, in which you continue your impostures up to number twenty. You declare that you have now concluded this set of charges, which composed your first part, and are coming on to the second, in which you are to adopt new methods of defence by showing that there are plenty of lax casuists besides yours, and just as lax. I now see, Fathers, how many impostures I have to answer; and since the fourth, where we left off, concerns homicide, it will be appropriate in answering it to deal at the same time with numbers 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18, on the same subject.

I shall therefore in this letter justify the accuracy of my quotations against your imputations of falsehood. But as you dared to maintain in your writings that 'your authors' views on murder are in conformity with papal decisions and ecclesiastical laws,' you oblige me to refute in my next letter a proposition of such temerity and so injurious to the Church. It is important to show that the Church is unspotted by your corruptions, so that heretics cannot profit by your aberrations to draw conclusions which dishonour her. Thus people, seeing on the one hand your pernicious precepts and on the other the Church's canons which have always condemned them, will at once see what to avoid and what to follow.

Your fourth imposture concerns a precept about murder which, you claim, I falsely ascribe to Lessius. Here it is: 'Someone who has been slapped may pursue his enemy forthwith, even using his sword, not to avenge himself but to redeem his honour.' Thereupon you say that this opinion belongs to the casuist Victoria. But this is not the point at issue, for there

is no inconsistency in saying that it is held by both Victoria and Lessius, since Lessius himself says that it is also held by Navarre and your Father Henriquez, who teach: 'that anyone who has been slapped may pursue his man forthwith, and strike him as many times as he considers necessary to redeem his honour.' It is therefore merely a question of whether Lessius agrees with the views of these authors, like his colleagues. And that is why you add: 'Lessius only quotes this opinion in order to refute it; and so I [Pascal] ascribe to him an opinion which he only adduces in order to challenge it, and this is a most shameful and cowardly way for an author to behave.' I maintain, Fathers, that he only quotes it in order to follow it. This is a question of fact which can easily be decided. Let us therefore see how you prove what you say, and then you will see how I prove what I say.

To prove that Lessius does not hold this view, you say that he condemns it in practice. And to prove that, you quote one of his passages, book 2, ch. ix, n. 82, where he says this: 'I condemn the practice.' I agree that anyone who looks for these words in Lessius, at n. 82, whence you quote them, will find them. But what are we to say, Fathers, when at the same time we see that he is there dealing with a completely different question from the one at present under discussion, and that the opinion of which he condemns the practice is not at all the one at issue here, but another entirely separate one? Yet to make this clear one has only to open the book at the place to which you refer, for there one will find all the rest of his argument on this subject.

He discusses the question 'whether one may kill for a slap' in n. 79, and concludes it in n. 80, without ever a single word of condemnation. This question being concluded, he begins on a fresh one in n. 81 'whether one may kill for defamatory remarks'. And it is of this that he says, n. 82, the words you quote: 'I condemn the practice.'

Is it then not quite shameful, Fathers, that you dare produce these words as evidence that Lessius condemns the view that

one may kill for a slap? And that having only quoted this one piece of evidence you exult, and say, as you do: 'Many persons of honour in Paris have already recognized this blatant falsehood by reading Lessius, and have thus learned how far this slanderer is to be trusted.' What, Fathers! is this how you abuse the trust which these persons of honour put in you? To convince them that Lessius does not hold one opinion you open his book at a place where he condemns another. And as these people never suspect your good faith, and never think of checking whether the disputed question is treated in that place, you deceive their credulity. I am sure, Fathers, that to safeguard yourselves against so shameful a lie you resorted to your doctrine of equivocation, and while you read the passage *aloud* said *under your breath* that it dealt with something else. But I do not know whether this argument, which is enough to satisfy your conscience, will be enough to satisfy the just complaint of these honourable people when they see how you have tricked them.

Take good care, Fathers, that they do not see my *Letters*, since this is your last remaining hope of keeping your credit a little longer. This is not how I treat your letters; I send them to all my friends; I want everyone to see them. For after all, having published this fourth imposture so resoundingly, you will be quite discredited if people learn that you substituted one passage for another. People will readily conclude that if you had found what you wanted in the place where Lessius actually discusses the subject, you would not have gone looking for it elsewhere, and that you only resorted to that expedient because you could find nothing there to suit your purpose. You wanted people to find in Lessius what you say in your imposture, line 12: 'that he does not agree that this opinion is theoretically probable'; and Lessius says expressly in his conclusion, n. 80: 'the opinion, that one may kill for a slap, is theoretically probable.' Is this not word for word the opposite of what you say? How could anyone do justice to the breathtaking audacity with which you produce textually the opposite of a factual

truth? Thus while you conclude from your substitute passage that Lessius did not hold this view, it is a patent conclusion from his genuine text that he did just that.

Moreover you wanted to make Lessius say that 'he condemns the practice'. As I have already said, not a single word of condemnation can be found in this place, but he says: 'It seems that one should not READILY permit this in practice: *in praxi non videtur FACILE permittenda.*' Is this the language of a man *condemning* a precept? Would you say, Fathers, that adultery and incest must in practice not be *readily permitted*? Are we not on the contrary to conclude, since all Lessius says is that it should not be readily permitted in practice, that it may sometimes be permitted, though only rarely? And as though he wanted to let everyone know when it should be permitted, and free the victims of offence from any scruples which might inopportunely disturb them if they did not know under what circumstances they were allowed to kill in practice, he was careful to point out to them what they must avoid in order to be able to practise this doctrine with a clear conscience. Listen to him, Fathers. 'It seems,' he says, 'that it must not be readily permitted BECAUSE of the risk of acting out of hatred, or vengeance, or overdoing it, or causing too many murders.' Thus it is clear that such murders will remain perfectly permissible in practice, according to Lessius, if one avoids these pitfalls, in other words if one can act without hatred or vengeance, and in circumstances which do not lead to too many murders. Do you want an example, Fathers? Here is quite a recent one, that of the slap at Compiègne.* For you will admit that the man who was slapped proved by his behaviour that he had the emotions of hatred and vengeance well under control. It only therefore remained for him to avoid an excessive number of murders, and you know, Fathers, that Jesuits so rarely slap officers of the royal household that there was no fear of a

* Where in a quarrel over use of premises in the Jesuit college, a Jesuit Father struck a royal official.

murder on that occasion resulting in many others. So you cannot deny that this Jesuit could have been killed with a clear conscience, and that the offended person could have put Lessius's doctrine into practice against him. Perhaps, Fathers, he would have done so if he had been taught in your school, and if he had learned from Escobar 'that someone who has been slapped is reputed dishonourable until he has killed the offender'. But you have reason to believe that the quite contrary lesson he learned from a priest of whom you are not too fond contributed not a little on this occasion towards saving a Jesuit's life.

Let us then have no more talk of these pitfalls which can so frequently be avoided, and apart from which murder is, according to Lessius, permissible even in practice. This has been fully recognized by your authors, quoted by Escobar in his *Practice of Homicide according to our Society*. 'Are we allowed,' he says, 'to kill someone who has slapped us? Lessius says that it is theoretically permissible, but is not to be recommended in practice, *non consulendum in praxi*, because of the risk of hatred or of murders prejudicial to the state which might result. BUT OTHERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT IF THESE PITFALLS ARE AVOIDED IT IS PERMISSIBLE AND SAFE IN PRACTICE: *in praxi probabilem et tutam judicarunt Henriquez, etc.*' That is how opinions gradually reach the highest degree of probability, for that is what you have done to this one, by finally permitting it without distinction of theory and practice, in these terms: 'Someone who has been slapped is allowed to retaliate forthwith by using his sword, not to avenge himself, but to preserve his honour.' This is what your Fathers at Caen taught in 1644, in public writings which the University laid before Parlement, in its third petition against your doctrine of homicide, p. 339.

Please note, therefore, Fathers, that your own authors themselves destroy the vain distinction between theory and practice which the University had treated as absurd, and of which the invention is a secret of your policy worth examination. For apart from the fact that it needs to be understood for

your impostures 15, 16, 17 and 18, it is always relevant to reveal bit by bit the principles of this mysterious policy.

When you took it upon yourselves to decide cases of conscience in a favourable and accommodating way, you found some which affected religion alone, like questions of contrition, penance, love of God, and all those that concern inner conscience. But you also encountered others affecting the state and religion, like questions of usury, bankruptcy, homicide and the like. Those who truly love the Church are deeply pained to see that on countless occasions when you have only had religion to oppose (since this is not the place for the visible exercise of divine justice) you have subverted its laws without fear, reservation or distinction, as can be seen from the boldness of your opinions against penance and the love of God.

But with those questions which concern both religion and the state you have divided your decisions, and created two question in these matters: one, which you call *theoretical*, where considering crimes in themselves, taking no account of the interests of the state but only of the law of God which forbids them, you permit them without hesitation, thus subverting God's law which condemns them; the other, which you call *practical*, where, considering possible prejudice to the state and the presence of magistrates maintaining public safety, you do not always approve in practice the murders and crimes which theoretically you find permissible, so that you cover yourselves as regards the judges. As an example of this, your authors Filiutius, tr. 29, ch. xxix, n. 52, Reginaldus, book 21, ch. v, n. 63 and others answer the question whether it is lawful to kill for defamatory remarks: 'that it is theoretically permissible: *ex probabili opinione licet*; but I do not approve of it in practice, because of the great number of murders which would result to the prejudice of the state if all slanderers were killed; and because anyone killing for such a motive would be punished by the law.' That is how your opinions originally appear with this distinction, whereby you only ruin religion

without seriously harming the state. You think this makes you safe. For you imagine that the credit you enjoy in the Church will prevent any punishment for your attacks on truth and that the precautions you take against such permission being too readily put into practice will cover you as regards the magistrates who, not being concerned to judge conscience, are strictly interested in nothing but external practice. So an opinion which would be condemned if described as practical can be safely advanced if described as theoretical. But once you have laid this foundation it is not hard to build the rest of your precepts on it. There was an infinite distance between God's commandment not to kill and the theoretical permission of your authors to do so. But the distance is very small between this permission and practice. There will be no shortage of arguments in its favour. You have found plenty in more difficult cases. Would you like to see, Fathers, the way to get there? Follow Escobar's reasoning; he decided it clearly in the first of the six volumes of his great *Moral Theology*, which I mentioned earlier, and where he is guided by quite other lights than in his collection of your 24 Elders, for while in those days he thought that there could be theoretically probable opinions which were not safe in practice, he has subsequently found out the opposite, and has amply established it in this later work: so much does the doctrine of probability in general grow with time, as well as each probable opinion in particular. Listen to him then, in his preface, n. 15: 'I do not see,' he says, 'how it could be that what seems permissible in theory should not be so in practice, since what may be done in practice depends on what is found permissible in theory, and the only difference between these things is that of cause and effect. For theory is what determines action. WHENCE IT FOLLOWS THAT ONE CAN WITH A SAFE CONSCIENCE FOLLOW IN PRACTICE OPINIONS THAT ARE PROBABLE IN THEORY, indeed more safely than those which have not been so closely examined in theory.'

Truly, Fathers, your Escobar sometimes argues rather well. In fact theory and practice are so closely connected that once the first has taken root, you make no more bones about allowing the other quite openly. This came out in the permission to kill for a slap, which from mere theory was boldly promoted by Lessius into a practice 'not readily to be approved' and thence, by Escobar, into 'a readily acceptable practice', whence your Fathers at Caen have developed it into full permission, with no distinction between theory and practice, as you have already seen.

Thus it is that you let your opinions grow bit by bit. If they appeared all at once in their extreme and final form, they would arouse horror; but such slow imperceptible progress accustoms people to them gently and obviates scandal. By this means the permission to kill, so odious to Church and state, is first introduced into the Church, and then from the Church into the state.

We have seen the opinion about killing for defamation meet with similar success. For today it has achieved similar permission, with no distinctions. I would not spend time quoting you passages from your Fathers unless it were necessary for refuting your confident statement, made twice over in your imposture 15, pp. 26 and 30: 'that no Jesuit permits killing for defamatory remarks.' When you say that, Fathers, you should prevent me from seeing it, for it is so easy for me to reply. Apart from the fact that your Fathers Reginaldus, Filiutius etc. permit it in theory, as already mentioned, and that Escobar's principle leads straight from there to the practice, I would also inform you that you have several authors who have permitted it in so many words, among others Father Héreau in his public *Lectures*, following which the King had him placed under arrest in your house for teaching, besides several other errors: 'that when someone who is disparaging us in honourable society goes on after being warned to stop, it is lawful to kill him, not in public, for fear of scandal, but in secret, *SED CLAM*.'

I have already mentioned Father L'Amy, and you are well aware that his teaching on this subject was censured in 1649 by the University of Louvain. Yet it is not two months since your Father Des Bois maintained at Rouen this censured doctrine of Father L'Amy, teaching: 'that a religious is allowed to defend the honour acquired by his virtue, even by killing someone who attacks his reputation, *etiam cum morte invasoris*.' Which caused such a scandal in that town that all the parish clergy combined to have him silenced and canonically obliged to retract his teaching. The case is still before the Archbishop's court.

What will you say then, Fathers? How can you undertake after that to maintain 'that no Jesuit is of the opinion that one may kill for defamation'? And what more is needed to convict you than the very opinions of your Fathers that you quote, since they do not forbid killing in theory, but only in practice, 'because of the harm it would cause the state'? On that point, Fathers, I ask you whether we are disputing about anything but the question of whether you have overthrown God's law forbidding murder. It is not a question of whether you have injured the state but religion. What is then the point, in this sort of dispute, of proving that you have spared the state, when at the same time you show that you have destroyed religion, by saying, as you do, p. 28, line 3: 'that Reginaldus's opinion on the question of killing for defamation is that an individual is entitled to such defence, considered simply in itself'? I ask for no more than this admission to refute you. 'An individual,' you say, 'is entitled to such a defence,' that is of killing for defamation, 'considering the thing in itself'; and consequently, Fathers, God's law forbidding us to kill is cancelled by this decision.

And it is no good then saying, as you do, 'that this is illegal and criminal, even according to God's law, because of the murders and disorders which would arise in the state, and because we are obliged, according to God, to consider the good of the state.' That is beside the point, Fathers, for there are two

laws to be observed: one forbidding us to kill, the other forbidding us to harm the state. Reginaldus may not have broken the law forbidding us to harm the state, but he has certainly broken the one forbidding us to kill. Now that is the only one at issue here. Besides, your other Fathers who permit these murders in practice have ruined one law as much as the other. But let us proceed, Fathers. It is obvious enough that you sometimes forbid harming the state, and you say that your intention in this is to observe the law of God which obliges us to uphold it. That may be true, though it is not certain, since you might act in the same way merely for fear of the judges. Let us then examine, if you please, the origin of such conduct.

Is it not true, Fathers, that if you really looked up to God, and if the observance of his law was the first and chief object of your thoughts, this respect would uniformly govern all your important decisions and would compel you to serve the interests of religion on all such occasions? But if on the contrary we see that on many occasions you break the most sacred commandments given to men by God, when there is only his law to oppose; that on the very occasions in question you nullify the law of God, which forbids such actions as criminal in themselves, and prove that only fear of the judges deters you from approving them in practice, do you not then give grounds for believing that it is not God whom you consider in your fear? That if you apparently uphold his law in what concerns the obligation not to injure the state, it is not for the sake of his law, but to achieve your ends, as the least religious politicians have always done?

What, Fathers! You tell us that one is entitled to kill for defamatory remarks if one only takes into account God's law forbidding murder, and having thus broken God's eternal law you think that you can dispel the scandal you have caused, and persuade us of your respect for him, by adding that you forbid this in practice in the interests of the state and for fear of the judges? Is this not rather provoking a fresh scandal? Not by the

respect which you thereby show for the judges, for I do not hold that against you, and you made complete fools of yourselves over that, p. 29. I do not reproach you for fearing the judges, but for fearing only the judges, and not the Judge of Judges. That is what I condemn, because it makes God out to be less hostile to crimes than men. If you said that one may kill a slanderer according to men, but not according to God, that would be less intolerable; but in saying that something too criminal to be endured by men is innocent and just in the sight of God, who is justice itself, what are you doing but proving for all to see, by this abominable reversal so contrary to the spirit of the saints, that you are bold before God and fearful before men? If you had intended to condemn these murders sincerely, you would have upheld God's commandment forbidding them; and if you had dared to permit these murders from the start, you would have permitted them openly, despite the laws of God and men. But as you wanted to permit them imperceptibly, and spring a surprise on the magistrates who watch over public safety, you have behaved very cleverly in separating your precepts, on the one hand advancing 'that it is permissible in theory to kill for defamation,' (for you are free to examine things theoretically) and on the other producing this separate precept: 'that anything permitted in theory is also permitted in practice.' For what interest does the state appear to have in this general metaphysical proposition? And thus, with these two principles being accepted separately and without suspicion, the vigilance of the magistrates is deceived, since these precepts have only to be combined to produce your desired conclusion, namely that one may in practice kill for mere defamation.

For here once again, Fathers, we have one of the subtlest manoeuvres of your policy: to separate in your writings the precepts which you combine in your judgements. This is how you established separately your doctrine of probability, which I have often explained. With this general principle firmly

established you put forward separately things perhaps innocent in themselves but which become abominable when combined with this pernicious principle. As an example I will give what you said on p. 11 of your impostures, to which I must reply: 'Many well-known theologians hold the view that one may kill for a slap.' It is certain, Fathers, that if someone who does not believe in probability had said that, there would be nothing to criticize, since it would in that case be a mere statement of no consequence. But you, Fathers, and all who hold this dangerous doctrine 'that anything approved by well-known authors is probable and safe in conscience', when you add to that 'many well-known authors hold the view that one may kill for a slap' what else are you doing but putting into the hands of all Christians a dagger to kill those who offend them, by declaring that they may do this with a safe conscience, because they will be following the opinion of so many grave doctors?

What an abominable language whereby the statement that authors hold a damnable opinion at the same time constitutes a decision in favour of this damnable opinion, and authorizes in conscience anything merely quoted! We understand it, Fathers, this language of your school. It is amazing that you have the effrontery to talk so loudly, for it so clearly reveals your feelings and convicts you of holding as safe in conscience the opinion: 'that one may kill for a slap', once you have told us that many well-known authors maintain it.

You cannot defend yourselves, Fathers, any more than you can appeal to the passages of Vasquez and Suarez which you bring up against me, in which they condemn the murders approved by their colleagues. Such evidence, separated from the rest of your doctrine, might dazzle those who do not understand it sufficiently, but your principles and your precepts must be taken together. You say here, then, that Vasquez does not admit murder. But what do you say on the other side, Fathers? 'That the probability of an opinion does not prevent the probability of the contrary opinion.' And elsewhere: 'it is

lawful to follow the less probable and less safe opinion, discarding the more probable and safer.' What follows from all this taken together but that we have complete freedom of conscience to follow whichever we like of these conflicting views? Where then is the benefit, Fathers, which you hoped to reap from all these quotations? It vanishes, since all that is needed for your condemnation is to combine these precepts which you separate in order to justify yourselves. Why then do you produce passages from authors I have not quoted to excuse those I have, since they have nothing in common? What right does that give you to call me an impostor? Did I say that all your Fathers are equally degenerate? Did I not on the contrary point out that your main interest lies in having men of every opinion to serve all your needs? Those who want to kill will be offered Lessius; those who do not will be shown Vasquez, so that no one goes away dissatisfied and without some grave author on his side. Lessius will speak like a pagan on homicide, and perhaps like a Christian on almsgiving; Vasquez like a pagan on almsgiving and a Christian on homicide. But by the method of probability, which Vasquez and Lessius support, and which makes all your opinions common property, they will lend each other their views, and will be obliged to absolve those who act in accordance with opinions which each condemns. This diversity thus further confounds you. Uniformity would be more tolerable; and nothing could be more contrary to the express orders of St Ignatius and your early generals than this confused medley of all kinds of opinions. I may talk to you about it one day, Fathers, and people will be surprised to see how far you have degenerated from the early spirit of your foundation, and how your own generals foresaw that disorder in your moral teaching could spell ruin not only for your Society, but for the universal Church as well.

I will meanwhile tell you that you can derive no advantage from Vasquez's opinion. It would be odd if among all the Jesuits who have written there were not one or two who said

what all Christians profess. There is no glory in maintaining that one may not kill for a slap, in accordance with the Gospel; but it is horribly shameful to deny it. Consequently, far from justifying you, nothing could add further to your guilt, because having had amongst you doctors who told you the truth, you did not remain faithful to the truth and preferred darkness to light. For you learned from Vasquez 'that it is a pagan opinion, and anti-Christian, to say that you may use a stick on someone who has slapped you; that it is nullifying the Decalogue and the Gospel to say that you may kill for such a motive, and that even the greatest scoundrels acknowledge that.' And yet you have allowed Lessius, Escobar and the others to decide, against these well-known truths, that all God's prohibitions against murder do not alter the fact that one may kill for a slap. What then is the good of now producing this passage of Vasquez against Lessius's opinion, except to show that Lessius is 'a pagan and a scoundrel', according to Vasquez? And that is more than I had dared to say. What else are we to conclude but that Lessius 'nullifies the Decalogue and the Gospel'? That at the last day Vasquez will condemn Lessius on this point, just as Lessius will condemn Vasquez on some other, and that all your authors will rise in judgement against each other in mutual condemnation of their frightful outrages against the law of Jesus Christ?

Let us therefore conclude, Fathers, that since your probability makes the sound opinions of some of your authors useless to the Church, and useful only to your policy, they only serve to show us by their contradictions the duplicity in your hearts, which you have fully revealed by declaring on the one hand that Vasquez and Suarez are against murder, and on the other that many well-known authors are in favour of it, in order to offer men two paths, thus destroying the simplicity of God's spirit, which curses those with duplicity in their hearts and who go two ways: '*Vae duplici corde et ingredienti duabus viis!*' [Ecclus. II, 14]

FOURTEENTH LETTER WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS TO A PROVINCIAL TO THE REVEREND JESUIT FATHERS

23 Oct. 1656

Reverend Fathers,

If I had only to answer your three remaining impostures concerning homicide, I should not need to write very much, and you will find them refuted quite briefly here; but as I think it much more important to horrify people with your opinions on this subject than to justify the accuracy of my quotations, I shall be obliged to devote most of this letter to refuting your precepts, so as to show you how far you have departed from the sentiments of the Church, and indeed of nature. The licence to kill which you so frequently grant shows that on this point you have so forgotten the law of God, and so extinguished the light of nature, that you need to be restored to the basic principles of religion and common sense. What could be more natural than the opinion: 'An individual has no right over the life of another'? 'We realize it so instinctively,' says St Chrysostom, 'that when God established the commandment not to kill, he did not add that this is because murder is evil; for the law supposes that we have already learned this truth from nature.'

So this commandment has been laid upon men throughout all ages: the Gospel confirmed that of the law, and the Decalogue merely renewed that which men had received from God before the law in the person of Noah, from whom all men were to descend. For in renewing the world at that time God said to that patriarch: 'And surely the blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.' [Gen. IX, 5]

This general prohibition removes from man all power over

the life of man. God has reserved it to himself alone to such an extent that, according to Christian truth (in this opposed to the false teaching of paganism) man has no power even over his own life. But because God in his providence has been pleased to preserve human society, and punish the wicked who disrupt it, he has himself established laws for taking the life of criminals; thus such murders, which would be punishable crimes but for his order, become laudable punishment by that order, outside which there can only be injustice. St Augustine has admirably represented this in his *City of God*, bk. I, ch. xxi: 'God,' he says, 'has himself made some exceptions to this general prohibition of killing, either by establishing laws for the execution of criminals or by sometimes giving particular orders for the execution of particular individuals. On these occasions it is not man who kills but God, of whom man is only the instrument, like a sword in the hands of the person wielding it. But with these exceptions whoever kills is guilty of murder.'

It is therefore certain, Fathers, that God alone has the power to take life, and yet, in establishing laws for the execution of criminals, he has entrusted this power to kings and states. St Paul teaches this when he speaks of a sovereign's right to execute men as coming from on high, and says: 'for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.' [Rom. XIII, 4]

But as it is God who gave them this right, he obliges them to exercise it as he would himself, that is with justice, according to St Paul's words in the same place: 'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good; for he is the minister of God to thee for good.' And far from reducing this power, this restriction on the contrary greatly increases it, by making it like God's power, powerless to do evil and almighty for good; which distinguishes it from that of devils, who have no power to do good, but only for evil. There is only this difference between God and sovereigns, that God being very justice and

wisdom can put to death on the spot whomsoever he chooses, whenever he chooses, however he chooses. For besides being sovereign ruler of men's lives, he cannot take life without cause or knowledge, since he is equally incapable of injustice and error. But princes cannot act like this, because while being God's ministers they are still men and not gods. Wrong impressions might catch them unawares; false suspicions might make them harsh; passion might carry them away; and this is what has compelled them to descend to human methods, and establish in their realms judges to whom they have passed on this power, so that the authority given them by God should be employed only for the purpose for which they received it.

You must realize then, Fathers, that to be innocent of murder one must act at once by God's authority and in accordance with his justice; and that if these two conditions are not jointly fulfilled, one is sinning either by killing with his authority but without justice, or with justice but without his authority. According to St Augustine, the consequence of this necessary combination is that 'whoever kills a criminal without authority becomes criminal himself, chiefly because he is usurping an authority which God has not given him'; and on the contrary, judges who do have such authority are still murderers if they cause the death of an innocent man against the laws which they should observe.

These, Fathers, are the principles of public peace and safety, accepted at all times and in all places, on which all the legislators of the world, sacred or profane, have based their laws. Even pagans have introduced no exception to this rule, except when there is no other way of averting loss of virtue or life, because, as Cicero says, they thought 'that on such occasions the laws themselves seem to offer arms to those who are in such distress'.

But apart from such an occasion, which I am not discussing here, there has never been a law permitting private individuals to kill, or tolerating it, as you do, to protect oneself from insult

or loss of honour or property, if one is not at the same time in danger of one's life; this, Fathers, I maintain even infidels have never done. They have on the contrary expressly forbidden it, for the law of the Twelve Tables at Rome ran: 'It is unlawful to kill a thief by day who does not defend himself by force of arms.' This had already been forbidden in Exodus XXII. And the law *Thief, ad legem Corneliam*, taken from Ulpian, forbids 'killing a thief even by night who does not endanger life.' See Cujas, *in tit. dig. de Justitia et Jure*, ad 1.3.

Tell us then, Fathers, by what authority you permit that which divine and human laws forbid, and by what right Lessius could say, bk. 2, ch. ix, nn. 66 and 72: 'Exodus forbids us to kill thieves by day who do not defend themselves by force of arms, and the law punishes those who kill in this way. But one would still not be guilty in conscience, if one is not sure of being able to recover what is stolen and is doubtful, as Sotus says, because one is not obliged to run the risk of a loss in order to save a thief. And all this is also permitted to ecclesiastics.' What strange effrontery! The law of Moses punishes those who kill thieves when they do not threaten life, and the law of the Gospel, according to you, shall absolve them! What, Fathers, did Jesus Christ come to destroy the law and not to fulfil it? 'The judges,' says Lessius, 'would punish those who kill on such an occasion, but one would not be guilty in conscience.' Is Jesus Christ's morality more cruel and less hostile to murder than that of the pagans, whose judges adopted the civil laws which condemn it? Do Christians set more store by worldly goods, or less by human life, than idolaters and infidels have done? What are your grounds for this, Fathers? Not any explicit law of God or man, but merely this strange argument: 'Laws,' you say, 'permit self-defence against thieves and meeting force with force. Now, once self-defence is permitted, murder is also considered permissible, otherwise defence would often be impossible.'

It is untrue, Fathers, that once defence is permitted, murder

is also. It is this cruel form of self-defence which is the source of all your errors, and which is called by the Faculty of Louvain: 'A MURDEROUS DEFENCE, *defensio occisiva*', in its censure of your Father L'Amy's teaching on homicide. I therefore maintain that there is so much difference, in law, between killing and self-defence that, even on occasions when defence is permitted, murder is forbidden unless one is in mortal danger. Listen, Fathers, to Cujas, in the same place: 'It is permissible to drive off someone who comes to seize our property BUT IT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE TO KILL HIM,' and again: 'If someone comes to strike us, but not to kill, we are indeed permitted to drive him off, but WE ARE NOT PERMITTED TO KILL HIM.'

Who then empowered you to say, as do Molina, Reginaldus, Filiutius, Escobar, Lessius and the others: 'It is permissible to kill someone who comes to strike us'; and elsewhere: 'It is permissible to kill someone who intends to insult us, according to the view of all casuists, *ex sententia omnium*,' as Lessius says, n. 74? By what authority do you, who are only private individuals, bestow this power of killing on individuals and even religious? How dare you usurp this right of life and death, which belongs essentially to God alone and is the most glorious sign of sovereign power? These are the questions which should have been answered; and you think you have satisfied them simply by saying in your 13th imposture that 'the value for which Molina allows us to kill a thief who runs away without offering any violence is not as low as I [Pascal] said, and must exceed 6 ducats.' How feeble, Fathers! Where would you fix it? At 15 or 16 ducats? I shall not criticize you any the less. At least you cannot say that it exceeds the value of a horse, for Lessius, bk. 2, ch. ix, n. 74, plainly decides 'that it is lawful to kill a thief who runs off with our horse'. But I may add that according to Molina this value is fixed at 6 ducats, as I quoted it, and if you will not agree, let us take a referee whom you cannot refuse. For this, then, I choose your Father Reginaldus, who explaining this same passage of Molina, bk. 21,

n. 68, declares 'Molina there FIXES the value for which it is unlawful to kill at 3, 4 or 5 ducats.' And so, Fathers, I shall have not only Molina but Reginaldus too on my side.

It will be no harder for me to refute your 14th imposture, concerning the licence 'to kill a thief who tries to steal a crown', according to Molina. That is so well established that Escobar will bear me out, tr. 1, ex. 7, n. 44, where he says 'that Molina fixes the value for which one may kill at a crown as a general rule'. You merely criticize me in your 14th imposture for suppressing the last words of the passage: 'in this one must observe the moderation of a just defence.' Why then do you not also complain that Escobar left them out too? You are not very subtle! You think that people do not understand what, according to you, constitutes self-defence. Do we not know that it means using 'a murderous defence'? You try to suggest that Molina meant that when one risks one's life in keeping this crown, then one may kill, since it is a question of defending one's life. If that were true, Fathers, why should Molina say in the same place: 'that in that he disagrees with Carrerus and Bald', who permit killing to save one's life? I assert that he simply means that if one can keep the crown without killing the thief, one should not kill him; but if one can only keep it by killing him, even if one's life is in no danger, as when the thief is unarmed, it is lawful to take up arms and kill him to keep the crown, and in so doing one is, according to him, observing the moderation of a just defence. To show you this let him explain himself, vol. IV, tr. 3, d. 11, n. 5: 'It is still observing the moderation of a just defence to take up arms against unarmed persons or to take more powerful arms than they. I know that some people hold the opposite view, but I do not approve their opinion, even in the outward tribunal.'

So, Fathers, it is established that your authors permit killing in defence of honour and property, even when one's life is in no danger. And by this same principle they authorize duelling, as I have shown in many passages which you have not answered.

In your writings you only attack a single passage from your Father Layman, who permits it 'when one would otherwise be in danger of losing fortune or honour'; and you say that I suppressed his additional remark: 'that such a case is very rare.' You take my breath away, Fathers; what absurd impostures to charge me with! It is very much in question whether such a case is rare! The point at issue is whether duelling is lawful in such a case! These are two separate questions. Layman, as a casuist, has to judge if duelling is then lawful, and he declares that it is. We can judge without his help whether such a case is rare, and we can tell him that it is perfectly ordinary. If you prefer to take the word of your good friend Diana for it, he will tell you 'that it is very common', part 5, tr. 14, misc. 2, resol. 99. But whether it is rare or not, and whether or not Layman follows Navarre in this, as you insist, is it not an appalling thing that he should admit this opinion? that to preserve a false honour it is lawful in conscience to accept a duel, against the edicts of all Christian states and against all the canons of the Church, when to back up all these diabolical precepts you have neither law, nor canon, nor the authority of Scripture or the Fathers, nor the example of any saint, but merely this impious argument: 'Honour is dearer than life itself. Now it is lawful to kill in defence of one's life. Therefore it is lawful to kill in defence of one's honour.'? What, Fathers! just because men have become degenerate enough to love this false honour more than the life God has given them to serve him, they shall be allowed to kill in order to preserve it! It is a terrible evil in itself, to love such honour more than life. Yet this vicious attachment, capable of soiling the most saintly actions if they were related to such an end, is to be capable of justifying the most criminal because they are related to it! What an upheaval, Fathers! Who can fail to see the excesses to which it can lead?

For in fact it is obvious that it will lead to killing for the least things if it becomes a point of honour to keep them; even, I say, to killing 'for an apple'. You would protest, Fathers, and say

that I am drawing malicious conclusions from your doctrine if I were not supported by the authority of the grave Lessius, who speaks thus, n. 68: 'It is unlawful to kill in order to keep something of little value, like a crown or AN APPLE, *AUT PRO POMO*, unless it would be a disgrace to lose it. For in that case we can take it back, even killing, if necessary, in order to retain it. *Et si opus est, occidere*; because it is not so much defending property as honour.' That is quite clear, Fathers. To finish off your doctrine with a precept which includes all the others, listen to this one by your Father Héreau, who took it from Lessius: 'The right of self-defence extends to whatever is necessary to protect us from any injury.'

What strange consequences are implicit in this inhuman principle! How strongly all must resist it, especially those in public office! It is not only the general interest which obliges them to do so, but their own as well, for your casuists quoted in my *Letters* extend the licence to kill even to them. Thus rebels who fear punishment for their crimes, which they never regard as unjust, and are readily convinced that they are violently oppressed, will at the same time believe 'that the right of self-defence extends to whatever is necessary to protect oneself from any injury'. They will no longer have to overcome the pangs of conscience which check most crimes at birth, and will only think of overcoming external obstacles.

I shall not speak here, Fathers, of the murders you permit which are even more abominable and of greater importance to states than all these, and are treated so openly by Lessius in *doubts 4* and *10*, as well as by so many of your other authors. We can only wish that these horrible precepts had never left hell, and that the devil, their original author, had never found men sufficiently devoted to his orders to publish them among Christians.

It is easy to judge from all I have said so far what a contrast there is between the laxity of your opinions and the strictness of civil and even pagan laws. What will happen then if they are

compared with ecclesiastical laws, which must be incomparably more holy, since the Church alone knows and possesses true holiness? The chaste bride of God's son who, like her bridegroom, knows how to shed her blood for others, but not to shed the blood of others for herself, has a particular horror of murder, in accordance with the particular enlightenment bestowed on her by God. She considers all men not merely as men, but as made in the image of the God she worships. She has a holy respect for each one of them, which makes them all worthy of veneration, as being redeemed at an infinite price to be made temples of the living God. Thus she believes that the death of a man killed without the orders of God is not only murder but sacrilege, depriving her of one of her members, for whether he is of the faith or not she always considers him as being one of her children, or capable of being so.

These, Fathers, are the most holy reasons which, since God became man for the salvation of men, have made their condition so important in the Church's eyes that she has always punished murder, which destroys it, as one of the greatest crimes that can be committed against God. I will quote you some examples, not with any idea that all these severities should be retained: I know that the Church may arrange external discipline in different ways; but to show her immutable attitude on the subject. For the penances she prescribes for murder may vary with the times, but the horror she feels for murder can never change with changing times.

For a long time the Church would not be reconciled until the hour of their death with those guilty of voluntary homicide, such as you permit. The celebrated Council of Ancyra imposed lifelong penance on them; and the Church thought she was being sufficiently indulgent when she subsequently reduced this period to a very large number of years. But to deter Christians still more from voluntary homicide, she punished with great severity even those cases which occurred through imprudence, as can be seen in St Basil, St Gregory of Nyssa, in

the decrees of Popes Zacharias and Alexander II. The canons quoted by Isaac, Bishop of Langres, vol. II, ch. xiii, 'prescribe seven years' penance for killing in self-defence.' And we see St Hildebert, Bishop of Le Mans, replying to Ivo of Chartres: 'He was right to impose an interdict for life on a priest who had killed a thief with a stone in self-defence.'

Do not then have the audacity to say that your decisions are in conformity with the spirit and canons of the Church. We defy you to show one which permits killing in defence of property only: for I am not speaking of the occasions when one might also have to defend one's life, *SE SUAQUE LIBERANDO*. Your own authors confess that there are no such rules, among others your Father L'Amy, vol. V, disp. 36, n. 136: 'there is no human or divine law,' he says, 'which expressly permits killing a thief who does not defend himself.' And yet this is what you expressly permit. We defy you to show one which permits killing for honour, for a slap, for an insult or for defamation. We defy you to show one which permits killing witnesses, judges and magistrates, whatever injustice one may fear from them. The Church's spirit is utterly remote from such seditious maxims, which open the door to those insurrections to which peoples are so naturally inclined. She has always taught her children not to render evil for evil; to give in before anger; not to resist violence; to render to each his due, honour, tribute, submission; to obey magistrates and superiors, even unjust; because we must always respect in them the power of God who has set them over us. She forbids them even more strictly than civil laws do to take the law into their own hands; and it is in this spirit that Christian kings do not do so even in crimes of high treason, but remit the criminals into the hands of judges to be punished according to the laws and forms of justice, which are so contrary to your conduct that the contrast will make you blush. For, since my argument leads me up to it, I would ask you to follow out the comparison between the way in which one may kill one's enemies, according

to you, and that in which the judges put criminals to death.

Everyone knows, Fathers, that individuals are never allowed to demand anyone's death; and that even if someone had ruined us, crippled us, burned down our home, killed our father, and was then preparing to murder and dishonour us, no court of law would listen to our demand for his death. Consequently it has been necessary to appoint persons to public office to demand this death on behalf of the king, or rather on behalf of God. In your view, Fathers, is it as an empty gesture and sham that Christian judges have established this procedure? Have they not done so in order to relate civil laws to those of the Gospel, lest the outward practice of justice should be contrary to the inner feelings which Christians should have? It is clear enough how this beginning of the course of justice confounds you, but the rest will overwhelm you.

Suppose then, Fathers, that these persons in public office demand the death of the man who has committed all these crimes; what is done about it? Is a dagger immediately plunged into his breast? No, Fathers, human life is too important, it is treated with more respect; the laws have not made it subject to all kinds of people, but only to judges of proven integrity and competence. Do you think that just one is enough to condemn a man to death? It takes at least seven, Fathers. Of these seven not one must have been wronged by the criminal, lest passion cloud or corrupt his judgement. And you know, Fathers, to ensure also that their minds are fresher it is still the rule to allot the morning hours to such functions. Such is the care taken to prepare them for so great an act, in which they take the place of God, whose ministers they are, to condemn only those whom he condemns himself.

That is why, in order to act as faithful dispensers of the divine power of taking human life, they are only free to judge according to the deposition of witnesses and all the other forms prescribed for them, after which they can in conscience only

pronounce according to the law, and can only judge worthy of death those whom the law condemns. In that case, Fathers, if God's order obliges them to give up the bodies of these wretches for punishment, the same order of God obliges them to take care of their criminal souls; indeed it is because they are criminal that they are obliged to take all the more care; thus they are sent to their death only when they have been given means of providing for their conscience. All that is very pure and innocent, yet the Church has such a horror of blood that she disqualifies from the ministry of her altars those who are present at a death sentence, though attended by all these religious circumstances; it is easy to realize from this the Church's attitude to homicide.

This, Fathers, is the way the law disposes of human life; let us now see how you do it. In your new laws, there is only one judge, and he is the very one who has been wronged. He is at one and the same time judge, plaintiff and executioner. He demands of himself the death of his enemy; he decrees it, he executes him forthwith, and without respect for either the body or soul of his brother, he kills and damns one for whom Christ died, and all this in order to avoid a slap, or defamation, or similar offence, when a judge, who enjoys legitimate authority, would be criminal to condemn to death the authors of such deeds, because the law is very far from so condemning them. Finally, to crown these excesses, there is nothing sinful, or even irregular, in killing like this, without authority and against the law, although one may be a religious or even a priest. What have we come to, Fathers? Are they religious and priests who talk like this? Are they Christians? Are they Turks? Are they human? Are they devils? And are these 'the mysteries revealed by the Lamb to the members of his Society' or abominations suggested by the Dragon to those who follow his party?

All in all, Fathers, what do you want to be taken for? children of the Gospel or enemies of the Gospel? One must

belong to one side or the other, there is no middle course. 'He who is not with Jesus Christ is against him.' All humanity is divided between these two classes of men. There are two peoples and two worlds spread throughout the earth, according to St Augustine: the world of God's children, who form a body of which Jesus Christ is head and king, and the world hostile to God, of which the devil is head and king. That is why Jesus Christ is called king and God of the world, because he has subjects and worshippers everywhere; and the devil is also called in Scripture prince of this world and god of this age, for he has agents and slaves everywhere. Jesus Christ has given the Church, which is his empire, such laws as were pleasing to him according to his eternal wisdom; and the devil has given the world, which is his kingdom, such laws as he wished to lay down. Jesus Christ has made it an honour to suffer: the devil an honour not to suffer. Jesus Christ bids those who are slapped to turn the other cheek: the devil bids those who are about to be slapped to kill those who try to do them this injury. Jesus Christ declares blessed those who share in his disgrace; the devil declares accursed those who are disgraced. Jesus Christ says: 'Woe unto you when men shall speak well of you!' And the devil says: 'Woe unto those of whom the world does not speak with respect!'

See now, Fathers, to which of these two kingdoms you belong. You have heard the language of the city of peace, which is called the mystical Jerusalem, and you have heard the language of the city of strife, which Scripture calls 'the spiritual Sodom'. Which of these two languages do you understand? Which do you speak? Those who belong to Christ have the same views as Christ, according to St Paul; and those who are children of the devil, '*ex patre diabolo*', who has been a murderer since the beginning of the world, follow the devil's precepts, according to Christ's saying. Let us then listen to the language of your school, and ask your authors: 'When someone tries to slap us, should we endure it rather than kill him?

Or is it lawful to kill in order to avoid the insult?' 'It is lawful,' say Lessius, Molina, Escobar, Reginaldus, Filiutius, Baldellus and other Jesuits, 'to kill someone who is about to slap us.' Is this the language of Jesus Christ? Answer again: 'Would it be dishonourable to endure a slap without killing the person inflicting it?' 'Is it not true,' says Escobar, 'that as long as one leaves alive the person who slapped him he remains without honour?' Yes, Fathers, 'without that honour' which the devil has passed on from his arrogant spirit to that of his arrogant children. This is the honour which has always been the idol of men possessed by a worldly spirit. It is to preserve this glory, which the devil really confers, that they sacrifice their lives, by giving themselves up to the savagery of duels, their honour, because of the ignominious punishments they may incur, and their salvation, because of the danger of damnation, which they risk, and which even deprives them of Christian burial, according to canon law. But we must praise God for illuminating the spirit of the king with purer light than that of your theology. His stern edicts on this subject have not made duelling a crime, they only punish the crime which is inseparable from duelling. He has deterred through fear of his rigorous justice those undeterred through fear of God's justice; and his piety has made him see that the honour of Christians consists in observing God's commandments and the rules of Christianity, not in this chimerical honour which you claim, vain as it is, to be a legitimate excuse for murder. Thus your murderous decisions are now repugnant to all, and you would be better advised to change your views, if not from religious principles, at least for tactical motives. Forestall, I pray you, Fathers, by voluntarily condemning such inhuman opinions, the evil effects to which they might give rise, and for which you would be responsible. For a better realization of the horror of murder, remember that the first crime of corrupt men was murder committed on the person of the first just man; that their greatest crime was murder committed on

the person of the chief of all the just; and that murder is the only crime which destroys at once the state, the Church, nature and pity.

I have just seen your apologist's answer to my *Thirteenth Letter*. But if he does not give a better answer to this one, which deals with most of his difficulties, he will not deserve a reply. I am sorry to see him constantly digress from the subject, to spread himself in slanders and insults against the living and the dead. But to lend more credence to the records you provide, you ought not to make him publicly disown something so public as the slap at Compiègne. It remains established, Fathers, on the admission of the offended party, that he was slapped on the cheek by a Jesuit hand; and all your friends have been able to do is to raise doubts as to whether it was the front or back of the hand, and debate whether a backhanded blow on the cheek should be called a slap or not. I do not know whose job it is to decide, but meanwhile I believe that it is at least a probable slap. That gives me a safe conscience.

FIFTEENTH LETTER WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS TO A PROVINCIAL TO THE REVEREND JESUIT FATHERS

25 Nov. 1656

Reverend Fathers,

Since your impostures increase daily and you use them so cruelly to attack all devout persons hostile to your errors, I feel obliged in their interest and that of the Church to reveal a mystery of your conduct, as I promised long ago, in order to demonstrate from your own precepts what credit should be given to your accusations and insults.

I know that those who do not know you well enough find it hard to make up their minds on this subject, because they find themselves forced either to believe in the incredible crimes of which you accuse your enemies or to regard you as impostors, which seems to them equally incredible. What! they say, if these things were not so, would religious publish them, and go against their conscience and damn themselves by such slanders? That is how they reason; and so, when the visible proofs with which your falsehoods are destroyed clash with their opinion of your sincerity, they are torn between the evidence of truth, which they cannot deny, and the obligation of charity which they fear to offend. Since they are only prevented from rejecting your defamations by their regard for you, if they can once be persuaded that you do not conceive of slander as they imagine, but believe that you can effect your salvation by slandering your enemies, it is beyond doubt that the weight of truth will at once decide them against putting any more faith in your impostures. This will be, therefore, Fathers, the subject of my letter. I shall not only show that your writings are full of slanders, I will go further. It is quite possible to tell untruths while believing them to be true, but the character of liar entails the intention of lying. I shall show then, Fathers, that

you intend to lie and slander; and that you consciously and deliberately impute to your enemies crimes of which you know them to be innocent, because you think you can do so without falling from grace. Although you know as well as I do this feature of your moral teaching, I shall still repeat it, Fathers, so that no one should be left in any doubt about it, seeing me address myself to you in order to maintain to your face something which you dare not deny without confirming by the denial itself the charge I bring against you. For it is so common a doctrine in your schools that you have maintained it not only in your books, but also in your public theses, which is extremely bold, as among others in your theses of Louvain in 1645, in these terms: 'It is only a venial sin to slander and impute false crimes in order to discredit those who speak ill of us: *Quidni non nisi veniale sit, detrahentis autoritatem magnam, tibi noxiam, falso crimine elidere?*' So well established is this doctrine among you that if anyone dares to attack it you accuse him of ignorance and temerity.

Father Quiroga, a German Capuchin, had that experience recently when he tried to challenge it, for your Father Dicastillus at once took him up; he speaks of the quarrel in these terms, *On Justice*, bk. 2, tr. 2, disp. 12, n. 404: 'A certain grave religious, barefoot and cowled, *cucullatus gymnopoda*, who shall remain nameless, had the temerity to disparage this opinion among women and ignorant persons, saying that it was pernicious and scandalous, prejudicial to morality, the peace of states and societies, and in short contrary not only to all Catholic doctors but to all those who might be Catholic. But I maintained, as I still maintain, that slander, when used against a slanderer, even when mendacious, is still not a mortal sin, nor against justice or charity; to prove this I offered him a host of our Fathers and whole universities composed of them, all of whom I consulted, among others Father Johann Gans, the Emperor's confessor, Father Daniel Bastele, the Archduke Leopold's confessor, Father Henry, sometime tutor to these two princes, all the

public and ordinary professors of the University of Vienna,' (wholly consisting of Jesuits) 'all the professors of the University of Graz,' (wholly Jesuit) 'all the professors of the University of Prague,' (controlled by Jesuits) 'from all of whom I possess written and signed approval of my opinion. I have moreover on my side Father de Pennalossa, Jesuit, preacher to the Emperor and the King of Spain, Father Pilliceroli, Jesuit, and many others who had all considered this a probable opinion before our controversy.' You can see, Fathers, that there are few opinions which you have taken so much trouble to establish, just as there are few of which you stand so badly in need. That is why you have given it so much authority that casuists use it as an unquestionable principle. 'It is well established,' says Caramuel, n. 1151, 'that it is a probable opinion that there is no mortal sin in spreading false slanders to preserve one's honour. For it is maintained by more than twenty grave doctors, by Gaspard Hurtado and Dicastillus, Jesuits, etc.; so that if this doctrine were not probable there would scarcely be one in the whole of theology that was.'

Abominable theology, so corrupt in every principle that unless it were probable and safe in conscience, that one may use slander without crime for the preservation of honour, scarcely any of its decisions would be so! How likely it is, Fathers, that those who hold this principle sometimes put it into practice! Men's corrupt instinct inclines so naturally to this headlong path, that it is incredible that with the obstacle of conscience once removed it will not give free rein to its natural violence. Would you like an example? Caramuel provides one in the same place: 'This precept of the Jesuit Father Dicastillus regarding slander,' he says, 'was taught by a German countess to the Emperor's daughters, and so convinced them they were at most sinning only venially by spreading slanders, that so many, together with defamatory remarks and false reports, arose in a few days that the whole court was set ablaze with alarm. For it is easy to imagine how they were able to exploit

it; so much so that to calm the storm a good Capuchin of exemplary life, Father Quiroga by name, had to be called in;' (and this is what provoked Father Dicastillus's attack on him) 'he declared this to be a most pernicious precept, especially among women, and took particular pains to get the Empress to forbid its use completely.' There is no cause for surprise at the evil effects of this doctrine; on the contrary it would be remarkable if it did not produce this licence. Self-love always makes us quite convinced that we are being attacked unjustly, and you especially, Fathers, who are so blinded by vanity that all your writings seek to prove that it is offending the honour of the Church to offend that of your Society. Thus, Fathers, it would seem very odd if you did not put this precept into practice. For it should no longer be said of you, as it is by those who do not know you: 'How could they want to slander their enemies, since they could only do so at the cost of their salvation?' But it should be said on the contrary: 'How could they deny themselves the advantage of disparaging their enemies, since they can do so without risking their salvation?' No one should be surprised any more at seeing Jesuits spread slanders; they do so with a safe conscience, and nothing can prevent them, for the credit they enjoy in the world enables them to slander without fear of human justice, and that which they have assumed over cases of conscience has enabled them to establish precepts by which they can do so without fearing divine justice.

This, Fathers, is the origin of so many black impostures. This is what made your Father Brisacier spread so many that he was censured in the end by the late Archbishop of Paris. This is what led your Father d'Anjou to denigrate from the pulpit of the church of Saint Benoît, 8 March 1655, the persons of quality who were collecting for the poor of Picardy and Champagne, and contributing so generously themselves, and to tell a horrible lie, capable of drying up this flow of charity if anyone believed your impostures, to the effect that: 'he knew for a

certain fact that these persons had diverted the money for purposes contrary to Church and state.' Which obliged the parish-priest, a doctor of the Sorbonne, to go into the pulpit next day to deny these slanders. Acting on the same principle your Father Crasset preached so many impostures at Orleans that the bishop of that place had to ban him as a public impostor in his order of 9 September declaring: 'that he forbids Brother Jean Crasset, priest of the Society of Jesus, to preach in his diocese, and forbids his people to hear him on pain of committing an act of mortal disobedience, having learned that the said Crasset had preached from the pulpit an address full of falsehoods and slanders against the ecclesiastics of that city, falsely and maliciously imputing to them support for such impious and heretical propositions as: that God's commandments are impossible; that inward grace is never resisted; and that Jesus Christ did not die for all men, and other similar propositions condemned by Innocent x.' For that, Fathers, is your usual imposture, and the first with which you charge all those whom it is important for you to discredit. Though it is as impossible for you to prove it of anyone as it was for your Father Crasset with the ecclesiastics of Orleans, your conscience still remains untroubled 'because you believe that this method of slandering those who attack you is so surely permissible' that you are not afraid to declare so publicly and before the eyes of a whole city.

This is borne out remarkably by the quarrel you had with M. Puys, vicar of St Nisier at Lyon; and as this story is absolutely typical of your spirit I will relate its principal circumstances. You know, Fathers, that in 1649 M. Puys translated into French an excellent book by another Capuchin 'concerning the parochial duties of Christians against those who divert them therefrom,' without using any invective, or designating any particular religious order. Your Fathers however took it as meaning them, and without respect for a senior priest, judge at the Primacy of France, honoured throughout the city, your

Fr. Alby wrote a slashing attack on him, which you sold yourselves in your own church on the Feast of the Assumption, in which numerous accusations were made against him, among others 'that he had become scandalous through his gallant affairs, and was suspected of impiety, heresy, being excommunicate and in fact fit for the flames'. To which M. Puys replied, and Father Alby in a second book maintained his original accusations. Is it not true then, Fathers, that either you were slanderers, or really believed all this about this good priest, and so would have needed to see him abandon his errors before judging him worthy of your friendship? Listen then to what happened at the reconciliation which was effected in the presence of a great many of the leading figures of the city, whose names are given below, as indicated in the act drawn up on 25 Sep. 1650. [Monsieur de Ville, vicar-general of the Cardinal of Lyon; M. Scarron, canon and vicar of St Paul; M. Margat, precentor; Messieurs Bouvaud, Sève, Aubert, and Dervieu, canons of Saint Nisier; M. du Gué, president of the treasurers of France; M. Groslier, provost of the merchants; M. de Flechère, president and Lieutenant-General; Messieurs de Boissat, de S. Romain, and de Bartholy, gentlemen; M. Bourgeois, first advocate of the king at the court of the treasurers of France; Messieurs de Cotton, father and son; M. Boniel; who all signed the original of the declaration, with M. Puys and Fr. Alby.]*

In front of all these people M. Puys simply declared: 'that what he had written was not addressed to the Jesuit Fathers; that he was speaking in general against those who draw the faithful away from their parishes, without any thought of thereby attacking the Society, which on the contrary he loved and honoured.' With these words and no more he recovered from his apostasy, scandals and excommunication, without retracting and without absolution. Fr. Alby then spoke to him in these very words: 'Sir, my belief that you were attacking the

* Pascal's note.

Company to which I have the honour to belong made me take up my pen to reply, and I believed that my course of action was LAWFUL. But now that I know your intentions better, I have come to declare to you that THERE IS NO LONGER ANYTHING to prevent me regarding you as a man of intelligence, enlightenment, sound learning and ORTHODOXY, IRREPROACHABLE morals and, in a word, a worthy pastor of your church. I make this declaration gladly, and I ask these gentlemen to remember it.'

They remembered it, Fathers, and the reconciliation caused more scandal than the quarrel. For who could fail to marvel at these words of Fr. Alby? He does not say that he has come to retract, because he has learned of a change of doctrine or conduct in M. Puys, but only 'because, recognizing that it was not his intention to attack your Company, there is no longer anything to prevent him from regarding him as a Catholic'. So he did not really believe that he was a heretic? Yet, having accused him against the facts known to him, he does not acknowledge his mistake, but on the contrary dares to say 'that he believed that his course of action was lawful'.

What can you be thinking of, Fathers, to prove publicly like this that you only measure men's faith and virtue according to their intentions regarding your Society? Why were you not afraid of making yourselves appear, on your own admission, impostors and slanderers? What, Fathers! the same man, without changing at all, according to whether you think he honours or opposes your Company, can be 'pious' or 'impious'; 'irreproachable' or 'excommunicate'; 'worthy pastor of the Church' or 'fit for the flames'; finally 'Catholic' or 'heretic'? So in your language it comes to the same to attack your Society and be a heretic? This is a funny heresy, Fathers; thus when in your writings we see so many Catholics called heretics it simply means 'you believe that they oppose you'. It is as well, Fathers, to understand this strange language, according to which I am unquestionably a great heretic. It is

in this sense that you often call me by that name. You only exclude me from the Church because you think that my *Letters* do you harm; and so all I have to do to become Catholic is either to approve the excesses in your moral teaching, which I could not do without renouncing all feelings of piety, or to persuade you that all I want is your true good, and you would need to have recovered fully from your aberrations to acknowledge that. Consequently I find myself strangely involved in heresy; since the purity of my faith is of no value in redeeming me from this kind of error, I can extricate myself only either by betraying my conscience or reforming yours. Until then I shall always be wicked and an impostor, and however faithfully I have quoted your texts you will everywhere proclaim: 'One must be the devil's tool to impute to you' things of which there is 'no sign or trace' in your books, and in so doing you will be acting in complete conformity with your precept and usual practice, so extensive is your privilege of lying. Permit me to give you an example which I choose deliberately because I shall at the same time be answering your 9th imposture, for they only deserve to be refuted in passing.

Ten or twelve years ago you were criticized for this precept of Fr. Bauny: 'that it is permissible to look for a proximate occasion of sin directly, *PRIMO ET PER SE*, for the spiritual or temporal good of ourselves or our neighbour,' tr. 4, q. 14, and he gives as an example of this: 'It is lawful for anyone to enter brothels in order to convert fallen women, although it seems likely that he will sin, from the fact that he has already found by frequent experience that he usually succumbs to sin at the blandishments of these women.' What did your Father Caussin reply in 1644, in his *Apology for the Company of Jesus*, p. 128? 'Look up the place in Fr. Bauny, read the page, the margins, what comes before, what comes after, all the rest, the whole book, and you will find not a trace of this opinion, which could only occur to the soul of a man utterly without conscience, and could apparently only have

been imagined by the devil's tool.' And your Fr. Pintereau, in the same style, part 1, p. 24: 'One would need to be wholly without conscience to teach so detestable a doctrine, but worse than a devil to attribute it to Fr. Bauny. Reader, there is no sign or trace of it in his whole book.' Who would not believe that people talking in such tones had reason to protest, and that someone had indeed put words into Fr. Bauny's mouth? Have you asserted anything against me in stronger terms? And how could one dare to imagine that a passage ran word for word in the very place quoted when told 'there is no sign or trace of it in the whole book'?

Truly, Fathers, this is the way to make people believe you until someone replies; but it is also the way to make them never believe you again once someone has replied. For so true is it that you were lying then that today you make no bones about acknowledging in your replies that this precept is in Fr. Bauny, in just the place quoted. And what is remarkable is that whereas it was 'detestable' twelve years ago, it is now so innocent that in your 9th imposture, p. 10, you accuse me 'of ignorance and malice for taking Father Bauny to task for an opinion which is not rejected in the Schools'. What an advantage it is, Fathers, to have to deal with people who state the pros and cons! I only need yourselves to confound you. For I have only got to show two things; one that this precept is worthless; the other that it is by Fr. Bauny; and I shall prove both from your own admissions. In 1644 you acknowledged it to be 'detestable', and in 1656 you admit it to be by Fr. Bauny. This double acknowledgement sufficiently justifies me, Fathers, but it does even more, it reveals the spirit of your policy. For tell me, if you please, what aim do you set yourselves in your writings? Is it to speak with sincerity? No, Fathers, since your replies are mutually destructive. Is it to follow the truth of the faith? Just as little, since you authorize a precept which is 'detestable' according to yourselves. But let us consider that when you called this precept 'detestable' you denied

at the same time that it was by Fr. Bauny; and so he was innocent: and when you admit that it is by him, at the same time you maintain that it is all right; and he is still innocent. Thus, as this Father's innocence is the only thing common to your two answers, it is obvious that it is the only thing you care about, and your only object is to defend your Fathers by saying of one and the same precept that it is and is not in your books, that it is good and it is bad, not according to truth, which never changes, but according to your interest, which is constantly changing. What could I not say to you on this subject? for you see that it is convincing. However, for you this is quite normal. To omit an infinite number of examples, I think you will be satisfied for me to quote one more.

You have been criticized at various times for another proposition of the same Fr. Bauny, tr. 4, q. 22, p. 100: 'Absolution must not be withheld or refused to those who habitually practise crimes against the law of God, of nature and the Church, although there appears to be no hope of amendment; *etsi emendationis futurae spes nulla appareat.*' I would ask you Fathers, to tell me who, to your taste, gave the better answer, your Fr. Pintereau or your Fr. Brisacier, who defend Fr. Bauny by your twin methods: one by condemning the proposition, but denying it to be by Father Bauny; the other by admitting it to be by Fr. Bauny, but at the same time justifying it. Listen then to their arguments. Here is Fr. Pintereau, p. 18: 'What can one describe as exceeding all the bounds of decency and surpassing all impudence if not the imputation to Fr. Bauny, as of something assured, of so damnable a doctrine? Judge, reader, the unworthiness of this slander; see whom the Jesuits have to deal with, and whether the author of so black an allegation should not henceforth be regarded as interpreter for the father of lies?' And now here is your Fr. Brisacier, part 4, p. 21: 'Fr. Bauny does indeed say what you quote.' This is plainly calling Fr. Pintereau a liar. 'But,' he adds in justification of Fr. Bauny, 'you who criticize this, wait, when a penitent is at your feet,

for his guardian angel to pledge all his heavenly rights as security. Wait until God the Father swears by his head that David lied when he said, by the Holy Spirit, that all men are liars, deceivers and frail; and that this penitent is no longer a liar, frail, fickle or sinful like the others; and you will never apply the merits of Christ's blood to anyone.'

What do you think, Fathers, of such impious and extravagant expressions as that 'if one had to wait until there was some hope of amendment' in sinners before absolving them, one would have to wait 'until God the Father swore by his head' that they would sin no more? What, Fathers! is there no difference between 'hope' and certainty? What an insult it is to the grace of Jesus Christ to say that the possibility is so remote that Christians will ever abandon crimes against the law of God, nature and the Church, that it is not to be hoped for 'unless the Holy Spirit lied'. Thus, according to you, unless absolution were given to those 'in whom there is no hope of amendment', the blood of Christ would remain of no avail and 'its merits never be applied to anyone'! What a state you are reduced to, Fathers, by the immoderate desire to preserve the glory of your authors, since the only two ways you can find to justify them are imposture and impiety, so that your most innocent defence is boldly to disavow the plainest evidence!

That is why you so often use that defence. But that is still not all you can do. You fabricate documents to make your enemies odious, like the *Letter from a Minister to M. Arnauld*, which you circulated all over Paris to make people think that the book on *Frequent Communion*, approved by so many doctors and bishops, but admittedly somewhat contrary to your views, was composed in secret collusion with the [Protestant] ministers of Charenton. At other times you ascribe to your opponents works full of impiety, like the *Jansenists' Circular Letter*, whose impertinent style makes the deception too crude, and too clearly reveals the ridiculous malice of your Fr. Maynier, who dares to use it, p. 28, to support his blackest impostures. You

sometimes quote books which have never existed, like the *Constitutions of the Blessed Sacrament*, from which you quote passages invented at your pleasure, and which make the hair of simple folk stand on end, because they do not know of your audacity in inventing and publishing lies. For there is no sort of slander which you have not employed. The precept excusing it could never have been in better hands.

But these are too easy to refute, and that is why you have subtler ones, in which you specify nothing, so that your opponents have nothing to fasten upon or answer; as when your Fr. Brisacier says: 'that his enemies commit abominable crimes, but he does not wish to mention them.' Does it not seem impossible to expose the imposture of so indeterminate a charge? Yet an able man found the secret of doing so, and he is another Capuchin, Fathers. Today you are having bad luck with Capuchins, and I foresee that one day you may fare no better with Benedictines. This Capuchin is called Fr. Valerian, of the house of the Counts of Magni. You will learn from this little story how he answered your slanders. He had been fortunate enough to succeed in converting the Landgrave of Darmstadt, but your Fathers, as though put out to see a sovereign prince converted without calling them in, at once composed a book against him (for you persecute men of virtue everywhere) in which, falsifying one of his passages, they impute to him a 'heretical' doctrine; and you were certainly very wrong to do so, for he had not attacked your Company. They also circulated a letter against him, where they said: 'Oh how many disclosures we could make,' without saying what, 'which could get you into serious trouble! For, if you do not look out, we shall be obliged to advise the pope and cardinals.' That is quite skilful, and I do not doubt, Fathers, that you will speak to them like that about me, but note well how he answered in his book printed at Prague last year, pp. 112 *et seq.*: 'What shall I do,' he says, 'against such vague and indeterminate attacks? How shall I pin down charges which are

unexplained? Yet there is this way. I openly and publicly declare to those who threaten me that they are notable impostors, most clever and impudent liars, if they do not reveal these crimes to the whole world. Appear then, accusers, and publish these things from the rooftops, instead of whispering them in people's ears, and lying the more confidently for doing so in a whisper. Some imagine these disputes to be scandalous. It is true that it is provoking a horrible scandal to impute to me a crime like heresy, and causing me to be suspected of several others, but I am only remedying the scandal by maintaining my innocence.'

Indeed, Fathers, that is treating you rather roughly, and no man ever justified himself better. For you must have been incapable of producing the least hint of crime against him since you did not answer such a challenge. You are sometimes put into painful predicaments, but it does not make you any the wiser. For, some time later, you attacked him again in the same way on another subject, and he again defended himself in the same way, p. 151, in these terms: 'Men of this kind, who are making themselves insufferable throughout Christendom, aspire, on the pretext of good works, to honours and domination, by diverting to their own ends almost all laws, divine, human, positive and natural. They attract, either by their teaching, or by fear, or by hope, all the great ones of this world, whose authority they abuse in order to further their detestable intrigues. But their misdeeds, although so criminal, are neither punished nor stopped, but on the contrary rewarded, and they commit them as boldly as if they were doing God a service. All recognize it, all speak of it with execration, but few are capable of setting themselves against so powerful a tyranny. This is what I have done, however. I have stopped their impudence, and I shall stop it again in the same way. I therefore declare that they lie most impudently, *MENTIRIS IMPUDENTISSIME*. If their accusations against me are true, let them prove them or stand convicted of an impudent lie.

Their reaction to this will reveal who is right. I would ask everybody to observe it, and meanwhile to notice that such men, who do not endure the slightest injury which they can avert, pretend to suffer most patiently those against which they can find no defence, and cloak with a false virtue their real impotence. That is why I have tried to excite their shame all the more keenly, so that the dullest can see that if they keep silent their patience will result not from their meekness but from a troubled conscience.'

This is what he says, Fathers, and he concludes like this: 'These people whose stories are known to all are so obviously unjust and so insolent in their impunity that I would need to have renounced Jesus Christ and his Church if I did not detest their conduct, even publicly, as much to justify myself as to prevent the simple from being misled.'

Reverend Fathers, there is no way left to retreat. You must stand convicted as slanderers and resort to your precept that this sort of slander is not a crime. This Father has found the secret of shutting your mouths, and this is how to behave whenever you accuse people without proof. One has only to answer each of you like the Capuchin Father '*mentiris impudentissime*'. For what else could one reply when your Father Brisacier says, for instance, that those he is writing against 'are the gates of hell, high priests of the devil, people fallen from faith, hope and charity, building the treasury of Antichrist'? 'I do not say this' (he adds) 'as an insult, but by the force of truth.' Would anyone waste time proving that he is not 'gate of hell, and not building the treasury of Antichrist'?

Likewise how should one answer all the vague statements of this kind in your books and in your *Notes* to my *Letters*? For instance: 'they apply money received in restitution to themselves and reduce creditors to penury; they have offered bags of money to learned religious, who have refused them; they give benefices away in order to disseminate heresies against the faith; they have on their payroll some of the most

illustrious members of the Church and sovereign courts; that I [Pascal] am also in the pay of Port-Royal, and that I wrote novels before my *Letters*', I who have never read a novel, and do not even know the titles of those written by your apologist? What is to be said to all that, Fathers, but: '*mentiris impudentissime*'; unless you specify all these persons, their words, the time, the place? For you must either keep quiet, or quote and prove all the details, as I do when I tell the stories of Jean d'Alba and Fr. Alby. Otherwise you will only do yourselves harm. All these fictions might have done you some good before people knew your principles, but now that all is discovered, when you think of whispering: 'that an honourable man, who wishes to remain anonymous, has told you terrible things about these people', you will immediately be reminded of the '*mentiris impudentissime*' of the good Capuchin Father. You have been deceiving people for far too long, and abusing their trust in your impostures. It is time to restore their reputation to so many victims of slander. For whose innocence can be so generally recognized as to remain unimpaired by the bold impostures of a Company spread all over the world, covering under religious habits such irreligious souls that they commit crimes like slander not against, but in accordance with their own precepts? Thus I shall not be blamed for destroying any credit you may have enjoyed, since it is much more just to preserve for so many people whom you have decried the reputation for piety, which they do not deserve to lose, than to leave you a reputation for sincerity which you do not deserve to keep. Since one could not be achieved without the other, how important it was to make it clear what you are! That is what I have begun to do here, but it will take a long time to complete it. We shall see it done, Fathers, and all your policy will not be able to save you. For any efforts you might make to prevent it would only show the least perspicacious observers that you were frightened, and, reproached by your conscience for what I had to tell you, had used every means of forestalling it.

SIXTEENTH LETTER WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS TO A PROVINCIAL TO THE REVEREND JESUIT FATHERS

4 Dec. 1656

REVEREND FATHERS,

Here is the next instalment of your slanders, of which I shall first answer those outstanding from your *Notes*. But as all your other books are just as full of them, they will provide me with enough material to discuss this topic with you as much as I deem necessary. In a word, then, regarding the fiction you have spread in all your writings against the Bishop of Ypres [Jansenius], I assert that you have maliciously misused a few ambiguous words in one of his letters, which, being capable of favourable interpretation, should be taken favourably according to the Church's spirit, and can only be taken otherwise according to the spirit of your Society. For when he says to a friend: 'Do not worry so much about your nephew, I will provide for his needs out of money in my possession,' why do you try to make him mean that he was taking this money without intending to return it, and not simply making an advance which would be repaid? But you must have been very imprudent, must you not, since you convict yourselves of lying by printing Jansenius's other letters, which conclusively show that these were indeed 'advances' which he was to repay? This is obvious from the one of 30 July 1619 which you quote, in the following terms which confute you: 'Do not worry about the ADVANCES; he will not go short of anything while he is here.' And from that of 6 Jan. 1620, where he says: 'You are in too much of a hurry, and even if there were any question of accounting for it, I have enough credit here to find money in case of need.'

So you are impostors, Fathers, just as much on this point as over your ridiculous tale of the poor-box at Saint-Merri*. For

* Allegedly robbed by a Jansenist.

what benefit can you derive from the accusation trumped up by one of your good friends against this ecclesiastic whom you wish to destroy? Is a man to be judged guilty just because he is accused? No, Fathers. Devout persons like him will always be liable to face such accusations as long as there exist slanderers like you. Thus we must go not by the accusation but by the verdict. Now the verdict, given on 23 Feb. 1656, fully acquits him, apart from the fact that the man who rashly involved himself in these unjust proceedings was disowned by his colleagues and himself obliged to retract. And as for what you say in the same place about 'the famous director* who enriched himself in a moment to the tune of 900,000 livres', it is enough to refer you to the parish priests of Saint-Roch and Saint-Paul, who will testify before the whole of Paris to his absolute disinterestedness in this affair and to your inexcusable malice in this imposture.

That will do for such empty falsehoods. These are only the trial shots of your novices, and not the master strokes of your fully professed members. I come to that now, Fathers; I come to one of the blackest slanders ever to issue from your minds. I speak of the intolerable audacity with which you have dared to allege that holy nuns and their directors 'do not believe in the mystery of transubstantiation and the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist'. There, Fathers, is an imposture worthy of you. This is a crime which God alone is capable of punishing, and you alone of committing. One must be as humble as these humble victims of slander to endure it patiently; one must be as wicked as such wicked slanderers to believe it. I do not therefore undertake to justify them against this charge; they are under no suspicion. If they needed defenders, they would find better ones than me. What I am going to say about it here is not to prove their innocence, but your malice. I simply want to make you horrified at yourselves, and show everyone that after that there is nothing of which you are not capable.

* M. Singlin of Port-Royal.

All the same you will not fail to say that I belong to Port-Royal, for it is the first thing you say to anyone who attacks your excesses, as though only at Port-Royal could people be found zealous enough to defend the purity of Christian morality against you. I know, Fathers, the merits of the pious solitaries who have withdrawn there, and how much the Church owes to their solid and edifying works. I know their piety and enlightenment. For although I have never belonged to their community, as you try to make out, without knowing who I am, I know some of them and honour the virtue of all. But God has not restricted to their number alone all those whom he wishes to oppose your disorders. I hope with his assistance, Fathers, to bring this home to you; and if he gives me grace to persevere in the intention he has inspired of using for him all that I have received from him, I shall speak in such a way as may make you regret that you are not dealing with a man of Port-Royal. Just to show you, Fathers, whereas those whom you attack with this infamous slander are content to offer their lamentations to God so that you may be forgiven, I feel obliged, as one quite unaffected by this insult, to make you blush for it before the whole Church, so as to effect the salutary confusion mentioned in Scripture, almost the only cure for such hardness of heart as yours: '*Imple facies eorum ignominia, et quaerent nomen tuum, Domine*: Fill their faces with shame that they may seek thy name, O Lord.' [Ps. LXXXIII, 16]

We must put a stop to this insolence which does not spare the holiest places. For who can be safe after a slander of this kind? What, Fathers! you yourselves advertise in Paris the scandalous book which has your Father Meynier's name at the front and the infamous title: *Port-Royal and Geneva in league against the most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar*, where you accuse of this apostasy not only M. de Saint-Cyran and M. Arnauld, but also his sister Mother Agnès, and all the nuns of the monastery, of whom you say, p. 96: 'That their faith regarding the Eucharist is as suspect as that of M. Arnauld,' whom you

claim to be, p. 4, 'really a Calvinist'! I appeal to all; is there anyone in the Church against whom you can lay so abominable a charge with so little probability? For, tell me Fathers, if these nuns and their directors were 'in league with Geneva against the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar' (which is a dreadful thought), why should they take as the principal object of their devotion this sacrament which they are supposed to loathe? Why should they add to their rule the institution of the Blessed Sacrament? Why should they take the habit of the Blessed Sacrament, the name of Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament?* Call their church the church of the Blessed Sacrament? Why should they request and obtain from Rome confirmation of this institution, and permission to say every Thursday the Office of the Blessed Sacrament, in which the Church's faith is so perfectly expressed, if they had conspired with Geneva to abolish this faith from the Church? Why should they contract the obligation, through a special devotion also approved by the Pope, to have unceasingly, night and day, nuns in the presence of the blessed Host, to make reparation by their perpetual adoration of this perpetual sacrifice for the impiety of the heresy which tries to destroy it? Tell me then, Fathers, why out of all the mysteries of our religion they should have left aside those in which they do believe in order to choose the one in which they do not believe? And why should they devote themselves so fully and wholly to this mystery of our faith if they took it, like heretics, for the mystery of iniquity? How do you answer, Fathers, such plain evidence, not of words only, but of deeds; and not of a few individual deeds, but of the whole course of a life entirely consecrated to the adoration of Jesus Christ dwelling on our altars? Likewise, how do you answer the books which you ascribe to Port-Royal, all full of the most precise terms used by the Fathers and councils to describe the essence of this mystery? It is ridiculous but horrible to see you answer throughout your libel in this way:

* In 1647 when they ceased to be Cistercian.

M. Arnauld, you say, indeed speaks of 'transubstantiation', but perhaps he means 'figurative transubstantiation'. He indeed gives evidence of believing in 'the real presence', but who told us that he does not mean by that 'a true and real figure'? What have we come to, Fathers? And whom will you not brand as Calvinist at will if you are allowed to go on corrupting the most holy and canonical expressions by the malicious subtleties of your new equivocations? For whoever used any other terms, especially in simple works of piety where there is no question of controversy? Yet the love and respect in which they hold this sacred mystery has made them so fill their works with it that I defy you, Fathers, artful as you are, to find the least hint of ambiguity or of conformity with the opinions of Geneva.

Everyone knows, Fathers, that the Genevan heresy consists essentially, as you yourselves mention, in believing that Jesus Christ is not contained in this sacrament; that it is impossible for him to be in more than one place; that he is really only in heaven, and should only be worshipped there, and not on the altar; that the substance of the bread remains; that the body of Jesus Christ does not enter our mouths or breast; that it is only eaten through faith, so that the wicked do not eat it; and that the mass is not a sacrifice but an abomination. Listen then, Fathers, to how 'Port-Royal is in league with Geneva in their books'. We read there, to your confusion: 'that the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ are contained under the species of bread and wine,' M. Arnauld's *Second Letter*, p. 259. 'That the Holy of Holies is present in the sanctuary, and should be adored there,' *ibid.*, p. 245. 'That Jesus Christ dwells in the sinners who communicate, through the real and true presence of his body in their breast, though not by the presence of his spirit in their heart,' *Frequent Communion*, part 3, ch. xvi. 'That the dead ashes of the saints' bodies derive their chief merit from the seed of life remaining to them from contact with the immortal and lifegiving flesh of Jesus Christ,' part 1, ch. xl. 'That it is not

by any natural power, but by the almighty power of God, to which nothing is impossible, that the body of Jesus Christ is contained in each host and the smallest fragment of each host,' *Familiar Theology*, lesson 15. 'That divine virtue is present to produce the effect signified in the words of consecration,' *ibid.* 'That Jesus Christ who lies humbled upon the altar is at the same time lifted up in glory; that he is, by himself and his ordinary power, in different places at the same time, in the midst of the Church triumphant, and in the midst of the Church militant and pilgrim,' *On Suspension*, reason 21. 'That the sacramental species remain in suspense, and subsist in an extraordinary way, without being supported by any subject; and that the body of Jesus Christ is also suspended under the species; that it does not depend on them as substances depend on accidents,' *ibid.* 23. 'That the substance of the bread is changed while leaving the accidents unchanged,' *Hours*, from the *Prose of the Blessed Sacrament*. 'That Jesus Christ resides in the Eucharist with the same glory as in heaven,' *Letters* of M. de Saint-Cyran, vol. 1, *Letter 93*. 'That his glorious humanity resides in the tabernacles of the Church, under the species of bread which visibly cover it; and that, knowing us to be dull, he thus leads us to worship his divinity, which is present everywhere, by worshipping his humanity, which is present in one particular place,' *ibid.* 'That we receive the body of Jesus Christ on our tongue, and that he sanctifies it through his divine touch,' *Letter 32*. 'That he enters the priest's mouth,' *Letter 72*. 'That although Jesus Christ has made himself accessible in the Blessed Sacrament as a result of his love and mercy, he still retains his inaccessibility, as an inseparable condition of his divine nature; because, though only his body and blood are there by virtue of the words, *vi verborum*, to use the scholastic term, this does not prevent his whole divinity, as well as his whole humanity, being there as a consequence and necessary conjunction,' *Defence of the Rosary of the Blessed Sacrament*, p. 217. Finally 'the Eucharist is at once sacrament and sacrifice,'

Familiar Theology, lesson 15, 'and though that sacrifice commemorates that of the Cross, there is this difference, that that of the mass is offered only for the Church and the faithful in communion with her, while that of the Cross was offered for all, as Scripture says,' p. 153. That will do, Fathers, to demonstrate clearly that there has perhaps never been a greater impertinence than yours. But I still want to make you pronounce this verdict against yourselves. For what do you require in order to remove any suggestion that someone is in league with Geneva? 'If M. Arnauld,' says your Father Meynier, p. 83, 'had said that in this adorable mystery there is no substance of bread under the species, but only the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, I would have admitted that he had declared himself completely against Geneva.' So admit it, impostors, and make public reparation to him for this public injury. How many times have you seen this in the passages I have just quoted? But moreover, as the *Familiar Theology* by M. de Saint-Cyran was approved by M. Arnauld, it contains the opinions of both, so read the whole of lesson 15, especially the second article, and you will find the words you require even more formally than you express them yourselves: 'Is there bread in the host and wine in the chalice? No; for all substance of bread and wine is removed to make way for that of the body and blood of Christ, which alone remains clothed in the qualities and species of bread and wine.'

Well, Fathers, will you still say that Port-Royal teaches nothing 'but what is accepted by Geneva' and that M. Arnauld in his *Second Letter* said nothing 'that could not be said by a minister of Charenton'? Get Mestrezat then to speak as M. Arnauld does in this letter, pp. 237 and following. Get him to say: 'That it is a monstrous lie to accuse him of denying transubstantiation; that he regards as fundamental to his books the truth of the real presence of God's Son, in opposition to the Calvinist heresy; that he considers himself fortunate to be in a place where there is continuous adoration of the Holy of Holies

present in the sanctuary'; which is far more contrary to the Calvinist belief than the real presence itself, since, as Cardinal de Richelieu says in his *Controversies*, p. 536: 'The new ministers of France by joining the Lutherans, who do believe it, have declared that they only remain separated from the Church, as regards this mystery, because of the adoration paid by Catholics to the Eucharist.' Get Geneva to sign all the passages which I have quoted from the books of Port-Royal, and not just passages but whole treatises on the mystery, like the book *On Frequent Communion*, *Explanation of the Ceremonies of the Mass*, *Exercises during the Mass*, *Reasons for suspending the Blessed Sacrament*, *Translation of the Hymns* from the *Hours of Port-Royal*, etc. And finally get them to set up at Charenton the holy practice of perpetual adoration of Jesus Christ, contained in the Eucharist, as it is done at Port-Royal, and it will be the most signal service you can render the Church, since Port-Royal would then not be 'in league with Geneva' but Geneva in league with Port-Royal and the whole Church.

Truly, Fathers, you could have made no worse choice than to accuse Port-Royal of not believing in the Eucharist; but I want to show what compelled you to do so. You know that I understand something of your policy, and you have certainly followed it out on this occasion. If M. de Saint-Cyran and M. Arnauld had only said what we should believe concerning this mystery, and not how one should prepare oneself for it, they would have been the best Catholics imaginable, and no one would have found any ambiguity in their terms 'real presence' and 'transubstantiation', but since all who attack your laxity have got to be heretics, and on the very point under attack, how could M. Arnauld fail to be one on the Eucharist after composing a book expressly directed against your profanations of that sacrament? What, Fathers! could he have said with impunity: 'that the body of Jesus Christ should not be given to those who always relapse into the same crimes and in whom no hope of amendment can be seen; they should be

excluded from the altar for a while, in order to purify themselves by sincere repentance, and thus approach it later with profit'? Do not allow that sort of talk, Fathers; you would not get so many people into your confessionals. For your Fr. Brisacier says: 'that if you followed that method you would never apply the merits of Christ's blood to anyone.' It suits you much better that people should follow the practice of your Society, quoted in a book by your Fr. Mascarenhas, approved by your doctors and even by your Father General, as follows: 'Any kind of person, even priests, may receive the body of Jesus Christ the very day that they have defiled themselves by abominable sins; far from being irreverent, the practice of such communions is on the contrary praiseworthy; confessors should not discourage them, but on the contrary advise those who have just committed these crimes to communicate straight away because, although the Church has forbidden it, this prohibition is annulled by universal practice throughout the whole world.'

That is what it means, Fathers, to have Jesuits throughout the world. This is the universal practice that you have introduced and wish to maintain. What does it matter if the holy tables of Jesus Christ are filled with abomination so long as your churches are full of people? So make your opponents heretics regarding the Blessed Sacrament. It must be done, at all costs. But how will you be able to manage it when they have given such irrefutable evidence of their faith? Are you not afraid that I am going to quote your four great proofs of their heresy? You ought to be, Fathers, and I must not spare your shame. Let us then examine the first.

'M. de Saint-Cyran,' says Father Meynier, 'consoling one of his friends on the death of his mother, vol. I, *Letter 14*, says that the most acceptable sacrifice one can offer to God on such occasions is that of patience: thus he is a Calvinist.' That is very subtle, Fathers, and I am not sure whether anyone will see why. Let him tell us then. 'Because,' says this great controversialist, 'he does not believe in the sacrifice of the mass. For that is the

most acceptable of all to God.' Now let anyone say that Jesuits do not know how to argue. So well do they know that they can make any remarks they like heretical, even those of holy writ. For is it not a heresy to say, like Ecclesiasticus [x, 10]: 'That there is nothing worse than to love money: *nihil est iniquius quam amare pecuniam*'; as though adultery, murder and idolatry were not greater crimes? Is there anyone who does not constantly find himself saying such things? For example, that the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart is the most acceptable in the sight of God; because in such remarks one is only thinking of comparing one inner virtue with another, and not with the sacrifice of the mass, which is of a quite different order and infinitely superior. Are you not ridiculous, then, Fathers? Do I need, to complete your discomfiture, to repeat the words of this same letter, where M. de Saint-Cyran speaks of the sacrifice of the mass as 'the most excellent of all', saying: 'Let us offer to God every day and in every place the sacrifice of his Son's body, who found no MORE EXCELLENT MEANS than that of honouring his Father'? And later: 'That Jesus Christ obliged us at his death to receive his sacrificed body, in order to make more acceptable to God the sacrifice of ours, and to unite himself to us when we die, so as to strengthen us by sanctifying through his presence the last sacrifice we make to God of our life and body'? Explain all that away, Fathers, and go on saying that he discouraged communion of the dying, as you do, p. 33, and did not believe in the sacrifice of the mass; for nothing is too brazen for professional slanderers.

Your second proof is good evidence of this. To make a Calvinist of the late M. de Saint-Cyran, to whom you attribute the book *Petrus Aurelius*, you make use of a passage where Aurelius explains, p. 89, how the Church acts with regard to priests and even bishops whom she wants to depose or degrade. 'The Church,' he says, 'being unable to remove from them the power of their order, because its character is indelible, does what she can; she deletes from her memory the character which

she cannot delete from the soul of those who have received it. She considers them as though they were no longer priests and bishops. Thus, in the ordinary language of the Church, they may be said to be so no longer, although they always remain so as regards their character: *ob indelebilitatem caracteris.*' You see, Fathers, that this author, approved by three general assemblies of the French clergy, clearly says that the character of priesthood is indelible; and yet you make him say just the opposite, in this very place, namely 'that the character of priesthood is not indelible'. This is a monstrous slander, that is, according to you, a petty venial sin. For this book had done you some harm, by refuting the heresies of your English colleagues concerning episcopal authority. But here is a notable aberration and a gross mortal sin against reason, for having falsely suggested that M. de Saint-Cyran holds this character not to be indelible, you conclude that he does not believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Do not expect me to answer that one, Fathers. If you have no common sense I cannot give you any. Anyone who has will laugh at you, as well as at your third proof, based on these words of *Frequent Communion*, part 3, ch. xi: 'That God gives us in the Eucharist the SAME FOOD as the saints in heaven, and the only difference is that he keeps its sight and taste from us, reserving both for heaven.' In truth, Fathers, these words so artlessly express the Church's view that I keep forgetting how you manage to abuse them. For all I can see there is that the Council of Trent teaches, Session 13, ch. viii: 'That there is no difference between Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and Jesus Christ in heaven, except that he is veiled here but not there.' M. Arnauld does not say that there is no other difference in the way of receiving Jesus Christ, but merely that there is no other difference in Jesus Christ whom we receive. Yet you try, against all reason, to make him say, in this passage, that we no more eat Jesus Christ with our mouths here than in heaven; whence you conclude his heresy.

You make me pity you, Fathers; do you need to have this further explained? Why do you mix up this divine food with the manner of receiving it? There is only one difference, as I have just said, between this food on earth and in heaven, which is that here it is hidden beneath veils which deprive us of its sight and taste, but there are many differences in the manner of receiving it here and there, of which the main one is, as M. Arnauld says, part 3, ch. xvi, 'here he enters the mouth and breast of good and wicked alike'; which is not the case in heaven.

And if you do not know the reason for this difference, I will tell you, Fathers, that God has established these different ways of receiving the same food because of the difference between the state of Christians in this life and that of the blessed in heaven. The state of Christians, as Cardinal du Perron says after the Fathers, is midway between the state of the blessed and that of the Jews. The blessed possess Jesus Christ in reality, without figures or veils. The Jews possessed Jesus Christ only under figures and veils, like the manna and the paschal lamb. And Christians possess Jesus Christ in the Eucharist truly and really, but still covered in veils. 'God,' says St Eucher, 'made for himself three tabernacles: the Synagogue, which had only shadows without truth; the Church, which has truth and shadows; and heaven, where there are no shadows but only truth.' We should be leaving our present state, which is that of faith, contrasted by St Paul both with the law and the beatific vision, if we possessed only figures without Jesus Christ, because it is the property of the law to have only the shadows and not the substances of things. And we should still be leaving it if we possessed him visibly; because faith, as the same apostle says, is of things not seen. Thus the Eucharist is perfectly proportionate to our state of faith, because it contains Jesus Christ truly but veiled. This state would therefore be destroyed if Jesus Christ was not really under the species of bread and wine, as heretics claim; and it would still be destroyed if we received

him openly, as in heaven, since this would be confusing our state either with that of Judaism, or with that of glory.

This, Fathers, is the mysterious and divine reason for this wholly divine mystery. This is what makes us abhor the Calvinists, for reducing us to the condition of the Jews, and makes us aspire to the glory of the blessed, which will give us full and eternal enjoyment of Jesus Christ. You can see from this that there are several differences in the ways he communes with Christians and blessed, among others that we receive him with our mouths, but not in heaven; but that all these differences depend on the one difference between our present state of faith and their state of the beatific vision. This, Fathers, is what M. Arnauld said so clearly in these terms: 'there must be no other difference between the purity of those receiving Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and that of the blessed than there is between faith and the beatific vision of God, on which alone depend the different ways of eating him on earth and in heaven.' You should, Fathers, have revered these holy truths in his words instead of corrupting them in order to find a heresy that was never there, and could never be there: namely, that we only eat Jesus Christ through faith, and not with our mouths, as your Fathers Annat and Meynier wickedly say, making this the main point of their charge.

You are badly off for proofs, then, Fathers, and that is why you have resorted to a new trick, of falsifying the Council of Trent, to make M. Arnauld appear not to be in conformity with it, so many expedients do you have for making people heretical. Fr. Meynier does this in fifty places in his book, eight or ten times on p. 54 alone, where he claims that to express oneself like a Catholic it is not enough to say: 'I believe that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist'; but that one must say: 'I believe WITH THE COUNCIL that he is present there in true LOCAL PRESENCE or locally.' Whereupon he quotes the Council, Session 13, canons 3, 4, 6. Would not anyone believe, seeing the phrase 'local presence' quoted from three canons of a

universal council, that it was in fact there? That might have done you some good before my *Fifteenth Letter*, but now, Fathers, people are not caught out any more. They look up the Council, and find that you are impostors, for these terms 'local presence, locally' were never there. What is more, Fathers, I declare that they are not in any other place in the Council, or in any previous council, or in any Father of the Church. I ask you then, Fathers, to tell me whether you intend to throw suspicion of Calvinism on everyone who has not used this term? If that is so the Council of Trent is under suspicion, and all the Fathers without exception. You are too fair-minded to cause such a commotion in the Church for the sake of a private quarrel. Have you no other way of making M. Arnauld a heretic without offending so many people who have done you no harm, among others St Thomas, one of the greatest defenders of the Eucharist, who far from employing this term actually rejected it, part 3, q. 76, a. 5, where he says: '*Nullo modo corpus Christi est in hoc sacramento localiter*: The body of Christ is in no way locally contained in this sacrament'? Who then are you, Fathers, to impose by your own authority new terms, whose use you prescribe for proper expression of the faith? As though the profession of faith drawn up by the popes, in accordance with the orders of the council, where this term is not to be found, were defective, and left some ambiguity in the belief of the faithful which you alone had discovered. What temerity to prescribe them to the doctors themselves! What mendacity to impute them to a general council! And what ignorance not to know the objections raised by the most enlightened saints against accepting them! 'Blush at your ignorance, impostors,' Fathers, as Scripture says to impostors like yourselves: '*De mendacio ineruditionis tuae confundere.*' [Ecclus. IV, 30]

Stop trying to play the masters; you have neither the character nor ability for that. But if you will advance your propositions more modestly they may secure a hearing. For though this word 'local presence' was rejected by St Thomas,

as you saw, because the body of Jesus Christ is not in the Eucharist in the normal extension of bodies in their places, yet this term has been accepted by some recent controversialists, because they simply mean by that that the body of Jesus Christ is truly under the species, and since these are in a particular place, the body of Jesus Christ is there too. In that sense M. Arnauld would have no objection to admitting it; since M. de Saint-Cyran and he have so often declared that Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist, is truly in one particular place, and miraculously in several places at once. So all your refinements go by the board, and you are unable to make remotely plausible a charge which it would only have been permissible to proffer on irrefutable evidence.

But what good is it, Fathers, to contrast their innocence with your slanders? You do not ascribe these errors to them in the belief that they maintain them, but in the belief that they are doing you harm. That is enough, according to your theology, to slander them without crime, and you may, without confession or repentance, say mass at the same time as you impute to priests who say it every day the belief that it is pure idolatry: which would be such a horrible sacrilege that you yourselves had your own Father Jarrige hanged in effigy for saying mass 'while in league with Geneva'.

I am therefore amazed, not that you impute to them so unscrupulously such grave and false crimes, but that you impute to them so imprudently such improbable ones. For you do indeed dispose of sins as you please, but do you think that you can dispose similarly of men's belief? Truly, Fathers, if the suspicion of Calvinism had to fall either on them or on you, I should find you somewhat at a disadvantage. Their words are as Catholic as yours, but their conduct confirms their faith, yours belies it. For if you believe as they do that this bread is really changed into the body of Christ, why do you not demand like them that the hearts of stone and ice of those whom you advise to approach it be sincerely changed into hearts of flesh

and love? If you believe that Jesus Christ is there in a state of death, to teach those who approach him to die to the world, to sin and to themselves, why do you welcome into his presence those in whom vices and criminal passions are still fully alive? And how can you deem fit to eat the heavenly bread those who are not fit to eat the earthly?

O great venerators of this sacred mystery, whose zeal is spent on persecuting those who honour it by so many holy communions, and flattering those who dishonour it by so many sacrilegious communions! How worthy of these defenders of so pure and adorable a sacrifice to surround the table of Jesus Christ with inveterate sinners, fresh from their infamies, and to place in their midst a priest sent by his confessor himself from his depravities to the altar, there to offer, in place of Jesus Christ, this most holy victim to the God of holiness and bear it in his polluted hands to these most polluted mouths! Is it not fitting for those who practise such conduct 'throughout the world' according to precepts approved by their own General, to allege that the author of *Frequent Communion* and the Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament do not believe in the Blessed Sacrament?

Yet even that is not enough for them. To gratify their passion they must finally accuse them of renouncing Jesus Christ and their baptism. These are not, Fathers, fanciful tales like yours. They are the deplorable outbursts by which you have filled to the brim the cup of your slanders. So monstrous a falsehood would not have been in hands worthy to maintain it had it remained in those of your good friend Filleau, through whom you originated it. Your Society has openly adopted it, and your Father Meynier has just maintained 'as a certain fact' that Port-Royal has for thirty-five years been involved in a secret conspiracy, with M. de Saint-Cyran and the Bishop of Ypres at its head 'to ruin the mystery of the Incarnation, make the Gospel out to be an apocryphal story, wipe out the Christian religion and set up deism on the ruins of Christianity'. Is that

all, Fathers? Will you be satisfied if people believe all this about those whom you hate? Would your animosity at last be sated if you had made them an object of horror not only to all those who are in the Church 'for being in league with Geneva', of which you accuse them, but also to all those who believe in Jesus Christ, though outside the Church, for the 'deism' you impute to them?

But who can help being surprised at the blindness of your conduct? For whom do you expect to persuade, on your word alone, without the slightest sign of proof and with every conceivable inconsistency, that bishops and priests, who have done nothing but preach the grace of Jesus Christ, the purity of the Gospel and the obligations of baptism, had renounced their baptism, the Gospel and Jesus Christ? that they had only striven to establish this apostasy, and that Port-Royal is still striving for it? Who will believe this, Fathers? Do you believe it yourselves, wretches that you are? And to what straits are you reduced since you must of necessity either prove this charge or be treated as the most abandoned slanderers there have ever been? Prove it then, Fathers. Name this 'worthy ecclesiastic' whom you allege to have been present at this meeting at Bourg-Fontaine in 1621, and to have disclosed to your Filleau the plan adopted there for destroying the Christian religion. Name these six persons whom you allege to have composed this conspiracy. Name 'the person designated by the initials A.A.' whom you say, p. 15, 'is not Antoine Arnauld', because he has convinced you that he was then only nine, 'but another who is still alive and too good a friend of M. Arnauld to be unknown to him'. You know him then, Fathers, and consequently if you are not yourselves irreligious you are obliged to delate this impious person to the king and Parlement so that he may be punished as he deserves. You must speak, Fathers, you must name him, or endure the embarrassment of being regarded henceforth as infamous liars unworthy ever to be believed. This is how the good Fr. Valerian has taught us that

we must 'rack' and drive to the limit such impostors. Your silence on this point will fully and completely nail it down as a diabolical slander. The blindest of your friends will be obliged to admit 'that it will be due not to your virtue but to your impotence', and to marvel that you have been wicked enough to extend it to the nuns of Port-Royal and say, as you do, p. 14, that the *Secret Rosary of the Blessed Sacrament*, composed by one of them, was the first fruits of this conspiracy against Jesus Christ; and on p. 95 'that they were inspired to write all the detestable precepts of this work' which is, according to you, an instruction in 'deism'. Your impostures over this work have been already unanswerably refuted in the defence of the censure of your Fr. Brisacier by the late Archbishop of Paris. You have no answer to that, and yet you go on abusing it more shamefully than ever so as to attribute to women of universally recognized piety the height of impiety. Cruel and craven persecutors, are the most secluded cloisters to afford no sanctuary against your slanders? While these holy virgins adore Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament night and day, according to their institution, you do not cease night and day to publish abroad that they believe that he is neither in the Eucharist nor even on the right hand of the Father; and you publicly cut them off from the Church while they secretly pray for you and the whole Church. You slander those who have no ears to hear you, nor mouths to answer. But Jesus Christ, in whom they are hidden only to appear one day with him, hears you and answers for them. This holy and terrible voice can be heard today, dumbfounding nature and comforting the Church. And I fear, Fathers, that those who harden their hearts, and obstinately refuse to hear him when he speaks as God, will be compelled to hear him when he speaks as judge.

For in fact, Fathers, what account will you be able to render for so many slanders, when he examines them, not according to the fantasies of your Fathers Dicastillus, Gans and Pennalossa, but according to the rules of his eternal truth and the holy

decrees of his Church, which, far from excusing this crime, so abhors it that she punishes it in the same way as voluntary homicide? For she withheld communion from slanderers, as from murderers, until the hour of their death, by the First and Second Councils of Arles. The Lateran Council judged those convicted of it unworthy of the ecclesiastical state although they subsequently reformed. Popes have even threatened to have those who slander bishops, priests and deacons denied communion at the hour of their death. And the authors of any defamatory libel who cannot prove their allegations are condemned by Pope Adrian 'to be whipped', Reverend Fathers, '*flagellentur*'. This shows how far removed the Church has always been from the errors of your Society, so corrupt as to excuse crimes as great as slander the more freely to commit them itself.

Certainly, Fathers, you might have caused many evils in this way if God had not allowed you yourselves to provide the means of preventing them and rendering all your impostures ineffectual. For this strange precept which exculpates them from crime has only to be published to discredit you completely. Slander is useless unless accompanied by a great reputation for sincerity. A detractor can only succeed if he is reputed to abhor detraction, as being a crime of which he is incapable. And so, Fathers, your own principle betrays you. You established it to make your consciences safe, for you wanted to detract without being damned and be among 'these holy, pious detractors' of whom St Athanasius speaks. Thus to save yourselves from hell you embraced this precept, which saves you according to the faith of your doctors. But this very precept which safeguards you, according to them, from the evils you fear in the other life, denies you in this one the advantages you hoped for. Thus by thinking to avoid the vice of detraction you have lost its fruits, to such an extent is evil inconsistent with itself, handicapping and destroying itself with its own wickedness.

You would therefore spread slanders more advantageously for yourselves if you professed to say with St Paul that mere evil-speakers, '*maledici*', are unworthy to see God, since that at least would win more credence for your defamation, although you would indeed be condemning yourselves; but while you say, as you do, that slandering your enemies is not a crime, your defamations will not be believed but you will still be damned. For it is certain, Fathers, both that your grave authors will not frustrate God's justice and that you could give no more certain proof of being untruthful than by resorting to lies. If truth were on your side, it would fight for you, and win; and whatever enemies you had 'truth would deliver you' according to its promise. You only resort to lies in order to maintain errors with which you flatter the sinners of the world, and to support the slanders with which you oppress the pious persons who oppose them. As truth is contrary to your ends you have had to 'make lies your refuge', as one prophet says [Is. XXVIII, 15]. 'Ye have said: ... when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.' But how does the prophet reply? 'Because ye despise this word,' he says, 'and trust in oppression and perverseness, *sperastis in calumnia et in tumultu*, ... therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant, and he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth or to take water withal from the pit.' [Is. XXX, 12–14] 'Because,' as another prophet says, 'with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked ... therefore ... I will deliver my people out of your hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.' [Ezek. XIII, 22–3]

Yes, Fathers, it is to be hoped that if you do not have a change

of heart he will deliver out of your hands those whom you have deceived for so long, either by leaving them in their disorders through your evil conduct, or poisoning them with your defamations. He will make the first realize that the false rules of your casuists will not protect them from his wrath, and will impress on the minds of the others the just fear of destroying themselves by listening to you and believing your impostures, as you destroy yourselves by inventing and spreading them throughout the world. For make no mistake about it; no one laughs at God or breaks with impunity his commandment in the Gospel not to condemn our neighbour before being certain of his guilt. Thus however pious they profess to be, and on whatever devout pretext, those who readily accept your lies must fear to be excluded from the kingdom of God for the one crime of imputing such grave crimes as heresy and schism to Catholic priests and nuns, with no other proof than impostures as palpable as yours. 'The devil,' says the Bishop of Geneva [François de Sales], 'is on the tongue of him who speaks evil, and in the ear of him who listens.' 'And evil-speaking,' says St Bernard, *Canticle 24*, 'is a poison which extinguishes the light of charity in both. So that a single slander can be fatal to countless souls, since it kills not only those who publish it, but also those who do not reject it.'

PS. Reverend Fathers, my letters used not to follow each other so closely or be so long. The short time at my disposal is the reason for both. I have only made this one longer because I did not have the leisure to make it shorter. The reason for which I was compelled to hurry is better known to you than to me. Your *Answers* met with scant success. You did well to change your methods, but I am not sure you made a wise choice, or whether people will say that you were afraid of the Benedictines.

P.PS. I have just heard that the person* generally thought to

* Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin.

be the author of your *Apologies* disowns them, and is vexed at having them attributed to him. He is right, and I was wrong to suspect him. For however much people assured me, I ought to have thought that he was too sensible to believe your impostures, and too honourable to publish them without believing. There are few people about capable of these excesses which are your speciality, and too characteristic of you to excuse me for failing to recognize your hand. Common rumour had carried me away. But this excuse, which would be too good for you, is not sufficient for me, who profess to say nothing without certain proof, and have only said this one thing. I am sorry, I retract and I hope you profit by my example.

SEVENTEENTH LETTER WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS TO A PROVINCIAL TO THE REVEREND FATHER ANNAT, S. J.

23 January 1657

REVEREND FATHER,

Your conduct had led me to believe that you wanted both sides to stay quiet, and I was quite prepared to do so. Since then however you have published so much in a short time that peace is evidently somewhat precarious when it depends on the silence of the Jesuits. I do not know whether this breach of the peace will do you much good, but for my part I am not sorry that it gives me a chance of dismissing the usual charge of heresy with which you fill up all your books.

It is time for me to put an end once and for all to your ever-growing audacity in treating me as a heretic. You do this to such an extent in the book you have just published that it has become intolerable and I should eventually come under suspicion if I did not answer as a charge of this nature deserves. I had despised such an insult in the works of your confrères, as well as innumerable others which they indiscriminately throw in. My *Fifteenth Letter* was a sufficient reply, but now you speak about it rather differently, and seriously make it the main point of your defence; it is almost the only one you use. For you say 'all that is necessary to answer my fifteen *Letters* is to say fifteen times that I am a heretic', and that 'once declared such I do not deserve to be believed by anyone'. In a word you treat my apostasy as beyond question, and assume it as a firm premise on which you boldly build. It is therefore in earnest, Father, that you treat me as a heretic and likewise in earnest that I shall reply.

You know very well, Father, that such an accusation is so grave that it is intolerable temerity to make it unless it can be proved. What proof do you have? When have I been seen at

Charenton? When have I failed to hear mass or carry out the parochial duties of a Christian? When have I acted in concert with heretics or in schism with the Church? What council have I contradicted? What papal constitution have I violated? You must answer, Father, or . . . you know very well what I mean. And what do you answer? I ask everyone to take note. You first assume that 'the writer of the *Letters* belongs to Port-Royal'; you then say 'that Port-Royal is declared heretical'; whence you conclude 'that the writer of the *Letters* is declared heretical'. So it is not on me, Father, that the burden of this charge falls but on Port-Royal, and you only lay it against me because you assume that I belong to them. Thus I shall not find it hard to defend myself, since I need only say that I do not belong and refer you to my *Letters*, where I said 'I am alone' and quite explicitly 'that I do not belong to Port-Royal', as I did in my *Sixteenth*, which came out before your book.

Find some other way then of proving me a heretic, or everyone will recognize how feeble you are. Prove from my writings that I do not accept the Constitution; they are not so very numerous. There are only sixteen *Letters* to look at, and I defy you, or anyone else, to produce from them the slightest sign of such a thing. But I shall show you just the opposite, for when I say, for instance, in the *Fourteenth* 'that anyone who in accordance with your precepts kills his brethren in mortal sin is damning those for whom Christ died', am I not obviously acknowledging that Christ died for these damned souls, and thus that it is untrue 'that he died only for the predestined', which is condemned in the Five Propositions? It is therefore certain, Father, that I have never said anything in support of these impious propositions, which I heartily detest. Even if Port-Royal did hold them, I declare that this would not enable you to conclude anything against me because, thank God, my only allegiance on earth is to the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, in which I desire to live and die, in communion with

the Pope, as sovereign head, and outside which I am fully convinced there is no salvation.

What will you do with someone who talks like that, and how will you attack me, since neither my words nor my writings afford any pretext for your accusation of heresy and I find protection against your threats in my own obscurity? You feel the blows of an unseen hand revealing your aberrations for all to see. You try in vain to attack me in the persons of those whom you believe to be my allies. I am not afraid of you either on behalf of myself or of anyone else, as I am attached to no community and no individual whatsoever. All the credit you may enjoy is of no avail as far as I am concerned. I hope for nothing from the world; I fear nothing from it, I desire nothing of it; by God's grace I need no one's wealth or authority. Thus, Father, I entirely escape your clutches. You cannot get hold of me however you try. You may well touch Port-Royal, but not me. Some have indeed been evicted from the Sorbonne, but that does not evict me from where I am. You may well prepare acts of violence against priests and doctors, but not against me who am without such titles. You have perhaps never had to deal with anyone so far out of your range and so well fitted to attack your errors, by being free, without commitments, without allegiance, without ties, without connexions, without interests; sufficiently acquainted with your precepts and determined to drive them as far as I may believe myself obliged by God to do, without any human consideration being able to halt or check my pursuit.

What then is the use, Father, since you can do nothing against me, of publishing so many slanders against people who are not involved in our differences, as all your Fathers do? You will not escape by such evasions. You will feel the force of truth which I bring against you. I tell you that you destroy Christian morality by separating it from the love of God, from which you dispense men; and you talk to me about the 'death of Father Mester', whom I never saw in my life. I tell you that

your authors permit killing for an apple, if it would be disgraceful to lose it, and you tell me that 'someone opened the poor-box at Saint-Merri'. What do you mean by constantly taking me to task over the book *On Holy Virginity*, written by an Oratorian Father* whom I have never seen, nor his book either? I marvel, Father, to see how you consider all your opponents as a single person. Your hatred embraces them all simultaneously, and makes them as it were into a body of reprobates, each of whom you expect to answer for all the others.

There is a lot of difference between the Jesuits and those who oppose them. You really do constitute one body united under one head; and your rules, as I have shown, forbid you printing anything without the consent of your superiors, who are made responsible for the errors of all the individual members 'without being able to excuse themselves by saying that they did not notice the errors taught therein, because they ought to have noticed them,' according to your ordinances and according to the letters of your Generals Aquaviva, Vitteleschi etc. Thus you are quite rightly blamed for the aberrations of your confrères in works approved by your superiors and the theologians of your Society. But as for me, Father, I must be judged by different standards. I did not subscribe to the book *On Holy Virginity*. All the poor-boxes in Paris could be opened without making me any less of a Catholic. In short I declare loud and clear that no one is answerable for my *Letters* but me, and that I am answerable for nothing but my *Letters*.

I might leave it at that, Father, without speaking of those other persons whom you treat as heretics in order to include me in the accusation. But as I am the occasion for this charge, I find myself under some obligation to turn the same occasion to triple advantage. For it is a considerable advantage to demonstrate the innocence of so many victims of slander. And it is another, very pertinent to my subject, to continue showing up

* Séguenot.

the artifices of your policy in such an accusation. But the advantage that I rate most highly is that I shall be able to tell everyone how false is the scandalous rumour which you spread on every side 'that the Church is divided by a new heresy'. And as you deceive countless people by persuading them that the points over which you attempt to stir up so great a storm are essential to the faith, I think it extremely important to destroy these false impressions and clearly to explain here of what they consist, in order to show that there are in fact no heretics within the Church.

For is it not true that if anyone asks what constitutes the heresy of those whom you call Jansenists, the immediate answer will be that it lies in the fact that such people say: 'that God's commandments are impossible: that grace is irresistible, and that we are not free to do good and evil: that Jesus Christ did not die for all men, but only for the predestined: and in short that they maintain the Five Propositions condemned by the Pope'? Do you not make out that this is why you persecute your adversaries?

Is this not what you say in your books, your conversations, your catechisms, as you did last Christmas at Saint-Louis, when asking one of your little shepherdesses:

'For whom did Christ come, my child?'

'For all men, Father.'

'Well, my child, so you are not one of those new heretics who say that he came only for the predestined?'

The children take your word for this, as do many others, for you treat them to the same fables in your sermons, as your Father Crasset did at Orleans, and was put under interdict for doing so. I admit that I too used to believe you. You had given me the same idea about all these people, so that when you began accusing them of holding these propositions I watched carefully to see how they would answer; and I was fully prepared never to go near them again unless they rejected them as manifest impieties. But this they did very loudly. For M. de

Sainte-Beuve, Regius Professor at the Sorbonne, censured these Five Propositions in his public writings long before the Pope; and these doctors brought out several works, among others the one on *Victorious Grace*, which they produced at the same time, in which they reject these propositions as both heretical and alien to them. For they say in the preface 'that these are heretical and Lutheran propositions, fabricated and invented at will, which are not in Jansenius or his defenders': these are their terms. They protest at having these propositions attributed to them, and in that connexion address you in the words of St Prosper, first disciple of their master St Augustine, to whom the semi-Pelagians in France imputed similar ones in order to bring odium upon him. 'Some people,' says this saint, 'have so blind an urge to disparage us that they take a course which ruins their own reputation. For they have deliberately fabricated certain propositions full of impiety and blasphemy, which they broadcast far and wide to give the impression that we maintain them in the same sense as expressed in their writings. But this answer will show both our innocence and the malice of those who imputed to us these impieties of which they are the sole inventors.'

Truly, Father, when I heard them speak like this before the Constitution; when I then saw them accept it with all possible respect and offer to subscribe to it, and M. Arnauld declare all this, more strongly than I can relate, throughout his *Second Letter*, I would have considered it a sin to doubt their faith. In fact those who wanted to refuse absolution to their friends before M. Arnauld's *Letter* subsequently declared that, after he had so clearly condemned the errors imputed to him, there was no reason to exclude either him or his friends from the Church. But you did not follow suit, and that is what made me begin to suspect that you were activated by passion.

For whereas you threatened to make them sign this Constitution while you thought they would resist, once you saw that they were ready to do so of their own accord you said no

more about it. Although it seemed that you ought to have been satisfied with their conduct after that, you still went on treating them as heretics: 'because,' you said, 'their heart belied their hand, and they were outwardly Catholics but inwardly heretics,' as you yourself said in your *Answer to Certain Questions*, pp. 27 and 47.

How strange I found this behaviour, Father! For is there anyone of whom this might not be said? How much trouble would be stirred up on such a pretext! 'Anyone who refuses,' says St Gregory the Great, 'to believe the confession of faith of those who make it in conformity with the Church's views is casting doubt on the faith of every Catholic.' I was therefore afraid, Father, 'that it was your intention to make these people into heretics, though they were not such,' as the same pope says about a similar dispute of his own day, 'because,' he says, 'it is not combating heresies but creating one to refuse to believe those who prove by their own confession that they are of the true faith: *Hoc non est haeresim purgare, sed facere.*' But I really knew that there were in fact no heretics within the Church when I saw that they had so fully cleared themselves of all these heresies that you were no longer able to accuse them of any error against the faith, and were reduced to taking them up merely on questions of fact concerning Jansenius which could not be matter for heresy. For you wanted to compel them to acknowledge 'that these propositions were in Jansenius, word for word, wholly and expressly,' as you yourself wrote '*Singulares, individuae, totidem verbis apud Jansenium contentae*,' in your *Cavilli*, p. 39.

Thenceforth I began to lose interest in your dispute. While I believed that you were arguing whether the propositions were true or false I listened to you carefully, for that affected the faith, but when I saw that all you were arguing about was whether or not they were 'word for word' in Jansenius, as the interests of religion were no longer involved, I lost interest too. Not that it seemed at all improbable that you were telling the

truth, for the statement that certain expressions are 'word for word' in an author affords no possibility of misunderstanding. Thus I am not surprised that so many people both in France and Rome were convinced by such a straightforward assertion that Jansenius really taught these things. That is why I was more than a little surprised to learn that this very point of fact which you had put forward as so certain and important was false, and that when challenged to quote the pages of Jansenius where you had found these propositions 'word for word' you were never able to do so.

I am relating this whole sequence of events because it seems to me that it throws a good deal of light on your Society's spirit in this whole affair, and people will wonder when they see, despite all I have just said, that you have never stopped proclaiming that they are still heretics, but have simply changed their heresy with the times. For as fast as they cleared themselves of one heresy, your Fathers substituted another, so that they should never be cleared. Thus in 1653 their heresy lay in the nature of the propositions. Then it was about the 'word for word'. Then you put it into their inmost hearts. But today there is no more talk of all this, and they are to be considered heretics if they do not sign the statement 'that the sense of Jansenius's doctrine is to be found in the sense of the Five Propositions'.

This is the subject of your present dispute. You are not satisfied that they condemn the Five Propositions, and indeed everything in Jansenius which might be on those lines and contrary to St Augustine, for they do all this. So the question is not, for example, 'whether Jesus Christ only died for the predestined', which they condemn as much as you do, but whether or not that is Jansenius's sense. On that point I declare more than ever that your dispute barely concerns me, as it barely concerns the Church. For although I am no more a learned doctor than you are, Father, yet I can see that the faith is not at issue here, since it is only a question of what Jansenius

meant. If they thought that his doctrine was in conformity with the proper, literal sense of these propositions they would condemn it, and they only refuse to do so because they are convinced that it is very different. Thus even if they misinterpreted it they would not be heretics, since they interpret it only in a Catholic sense.

To explain this by an example, I will take the difference of opinion between St Basil and St Athanasius over the writings of St Denis of Alexandria, which St Basil thought to contain Arius's view against the equality of Father and Son, and so condemned as heretical, but which St Athanasius, on the contrary, thought to contain the Church's true view and supported as Catholic. Do you then think, Father, that St Basil, who held these writings to be Arian, had any right to treat St Athanasius as a heretic because he defended them? What cause would he have had for doing so since it was not Arianism that he was defending but the truth of the faith, which he thought to be in them? If these two saints had agreed on the true sense of these writings and had both recognized in them this heresy, St Athanasius could undoubtedly not have approved them without being heretical, but as they differed over the sense, St Athanasius was perfectly Catholic in supporting them, even if he had misinterpreted them, since this would only have been an error of fact and in this doctrine he was only defending the Catholic faith which he supposed it to contain.

Likewise I say to you, Father, if you agreed on Jansenius's meaning, and they agreed with you, for instance, that he holds that 'grace is irresistible', then those who refused to condemn it would be heretics. But when you are in dispute over his meaning, and they believe that according to his doctrine 'grace can be resisted', then you have no cause to treat them as heretics, whatever heresy you attribute to him yourselves, since they condemn the meaning which you suppose him to have, and you would never dare condemn the meaning they suppose. Therefore if you want to convict them, prove that the

meaning they attribute to Jansenius is heretical; for then they will themselves be so. But how could you do it, since it remains true, on your own admission, that the meaning they give him is not condemned?

To prove this to you clearly I will adopt as a principle something you acknowledge yourself, 'that the doctrine of efficacious grace has not been condemned, and the Pope has not affected it by his Constitution.' Indeed, when he wished to judge the Five Propositions, the question of efficacious grace was protected from all censure. This is perfectly obvious from the judgements of the consultants to whom the Pope referred them for examination. I have these judgements in my hands, as do many people in Paris, including the Bishop of Montpellier, who brought them from Rome. It will be seen that their opinions were divided, and that the chief among them, like the Master of the Sacred Palace, the Commissary of the Holy Office, the General of the Augustinians and others, believing that these propositions could be taken in the sense of efficacious grace, were of the opinion that they should not be censured; whereas the others, agreeing that they must not be condemned if they meant that, considered that they should be because, according to their declaration, their proper and natural sense was very far removed from it. That is why the Pope condemned them, and everyone submitted to his judgement.

It is certain then, Father, that efficacious grace has not been condemned. It is indeed so powerfully upheld by St Augustine, St Thomas and all his school, by so many popes and councils, by the whole of tradition, that it would be impious to treat it as heresy. Now all whom you treat as heretics declare that they can find in Jansenius nothing but this doctrine of efficacious grace, and this is the one thing they maintained in Rome. You acknowledged this yourself, *Cavilli*, p. 35, where you declare 'that in speaking before the Pope they did not say a word about the Propositions, *ne verbum quidem*, and spent all their time talking about efficacious grace.' Thus whether or not they are

mistaken in their assumption, there is at least no doubt that the meaning which they assume is not heretical, and consequently that they are not so either. For, to put the matter in a nutshell, either Jansenius only taught efficacious grace, in which case he is free from error; or he taught something else, in which case he has no one to defend him. Thus the whole question is whether Jansenius in fact taught anything but efficacious grace, and if it is found that he did, you will have the glory of having understood him best, but they will not have the misfortune of having erred in the faith.

So we must praise God, Father, that there really is no heresy within the Church, since the only issue concerns a point of fact, which cannot constitute heresy. For the Church decides points of faith with a divine authority, and excludes from her body all who refuse to accept them, but she acts otherwise over matters of fact. The reason is that our salvation is bound up with the faith revealed to us and preserved in the Church by tradition, but does not depend on other particular facts, which have not been revealed by God. Thus we are obliged to believe that God's commandments are not impossible, but we are not obliged to know what Jansenius taught on that subject. That is why God guides the Church in determining points of faith, through the help of his spirit, which cannot err; whereas on matters of fact he leaves her to act according to reason and the senses, the natural judges of such things. For God alone can instruct the Church in the faith, but one has only to read Jansenius to know whether given propositions are in his book. This is why it is heresy to resist decisions of faith, because this is setting up one's own spirit against God's spirit; but it is not heresy, though it may be temerity, not to believe certain particular facts, because this is only setting up reason, which may be clear, against an authority which is great but not in that respect infallible.

This is recognized by all theologians, as is clear from this precept of Cardinal Bellarmine of your Society: 'Lawfully

convened general councils cannot err in defining dogmas of faith, but they can err on questions of fact.' And elsewhere: 'The pope, as pope, even presiding over a general council, may err in particular controversies of fact which depend mainly on the information and evidence of men.' Likewise Cardinal Baronius: 'We must entirely submit to the decisions of councils on points of faith, but as regards individuals and their writings, past censures have not been so rigorously maintained because anyone is liable to make mistakes.' It is for this reason too that the Archbishop of Toulouse took this rule from the letters of two great popes, St Leo and Pelagius II: 'that the proper object of councils is faith, and anything there resolved apart from matters of faith may be reviewed and examined afresh, whereas there must be no further examination of what has been decided on matters of faith, because, as Tertullian says, the rule of faith alone is immutable and irreversible.'

Thus it is that lawfully convened councils have never been found contradicting each other on questions of faith, 'because,' as the Archbishop of Toulouse says, 'it is not even permissible to re-examine what has been already decided in matters of faith.' These same councils have sometimes been found to differ on questions of fact where the point at issue was the interpretation of an author, 'because,' as the same Archbishop says, after the popes whom he quotes, 'anything resolved in councils apart from matters of faith may be reviewed and examined afresh.' Thus the Fourth and Fifth Councils seem to contradict one another on the interpretation of the same authors, and the same thing occurred with two popes over the proposition of certain Scythian monks. For after Pope Hormisdas had condemned it by interpreting it unfavourably, Pope John II, his successor, re-examined it, interpreted it favourably, approved it and declared it Catholic. Would you therefore say that one of these popes was a heretic? And must it then not be admitted that so long as one condemns the heretical interpretation put upon a given work by a pope, one is not heretical for failing to con-

demn the work, by interpreting it in a way which it is certain that the pope has not condemned, since otherwise one of these two popes must have fallen into error?

I wanted, Father, to familiarize you with the contradictions arising between Catholics on questions of fact regarding the interpretation of a particular author, by showing you in this connexion one Father of the Church against another, a pope against a pope and a council against a council, in order to lead you on from there to other examples of similar disagreement, though less well matched. For you will see councils and popes on the one hand and Jesuits on the other opposing their decisions regarding an author's meaning, and yet you do not accuse your confrères of heresy, or even of temerity.

You are well aware, Father, that Origen's writings were condemned by several councils and several popes, and even by the Fifth General Council, as containing heresies, among others that of 'the reconciliation of the devils at the day of judgement'. Do you think it absolutely necessary in order to be Catholic to confess that Origen really held these errors, and that it is not enough to condemn them without ascribing them to him? If that were so, what would become of your Father Halloix, who maintained the purity of Origen's faith, as well as several other Catholics who undertook the same thing, like Pico della Mirandola and Génébrard, doctor of the Sorbonne? And is it not also certain that this same Fifth Council condemned Theodoret's writings against St Cyril 'as impious, contrary to the true faith and containing the Nestorian heresy'? Yet Father Sirmond, a Jesuit, still defended him and said, in his life of that Father, 'that these same writings are free from the Nestorian heresy'.

So you see, Father, that, when the Church condemns certain works, she assumes them to contain some error which she condemns and it is then an article of faith that this error is condemned, but it is not an article of faith that these works really contain the error which the Church assumes to be there. I

think this is sufficiently proven, and so I shall end these examples with that of Pope Honorius, whose story is so familiar. As is well known, at the beginning of the seventh century the Church was troubled by the Monothelite heresy, and to end the dispute this pope made a decree which seemed to favour these heretics, to the scandal of many. Nevertheless this took place without much stir during his pontificate, but fifty years later, when the Church was assembled in the Sixth General Council, presided over by Pope Agathon through his legates, this decree was referred for judgement, and after being read and examined was condemned as containing the Monothelite heresy, and burnt as such before the whole assembly, together with other writings of these heretics. This decision was received with such respect and uniformity throughout the Church that it was subsequently confirmed by two more general councils, and even by Popes Leo II and Adrian II, who lived 200 years later, without any disturbance of such peaceful and universal agreement for seven or eight centuries. However, some recent authors, among others Cardinal Bellarmine, did not think they were being heretical in maintaining against so many popes and councils that Honorius's writings are free from the error they had been declared to contain: 'because,' he said, 'as general councils can err on questions of fact, it may be confidently asserted that the Sixth Council was mistaken over this fact, and having misunderstood Honorius's letters, wrongly ranked that pope among the heretics.'

Please note, Father, that one is not a heretic for saying that Pope Honorius was not one, although many popes and councils declared him such, even after examination. So I now come to our question, and I will let you make out as good a case as you can. What will you say, Father, in order to make your opponents heretics? 'That Pope Innocent X declared that the error of the Five Propositions is in Jansenius'? I will let you say all that. What do you conclude? 'That it is heretical not to recognize that the error of the Five Propositions is in Jansenius?' How does it

seem to you, Father, is this not a question of fact of the same kind as the preceding ones? The Pope declared that the error of the Five Propositions was in Jansenius, just as his predecessors declared that the errors of the Nestorians and Monothelites were in the writings of Theodoret and Honorius. On that point your Fathers have written that they indeed condemn these heresies, but do not agree that these authors held them; just as your opponents say today that they indeed condemn the Five Propositions, but do not agree that Jansenius taught them. Truly, Father, these cases are very much alike, and if there is any difference, it is easy to see how much it favours the present question, by a comparison between a number of particular circumstances which are self-evident and which I shall not stop to relate. How is it then, Father, that in identical cases your Fathers are Catholic and your opponents heretics? And by what strange exception do you deprive them of a liberty which you allow all the rest of the faithful?

What are you going to say about that, Father? 'That the Pope confirmed his Constitution by a brief'? I reply that two general councils and two popes confirmed the condemnation of Honorius's letters. But what force do you claim to give the words of this brief by which the Pope declares 'that he has condemned the doctrine of Jansenius in these Five Propositions'? What does that add to the Constitution, and what follows from it? Only that, just as the Sixth Council condemned the doctrine of Honorius, believing it to be the same as that of the Monothelites, so the Pope said that he condemned Jansenius's doctrine in these Five Propositions, supposing it to be the same as these propositions. How could he have failed to believe it? Your Society everywhere proclaims nothing else; you yourself, Father, who said that the Propositions are in Jansenius 'word for word', were in Rome at the time of the censure, for I am always coming across you. Could the Pope have suspected the sincerity or competence of so many grave religious? How could he have failed to believe that Jansenius's

doctrine was the same as that of the Five Propositions when you had assured him that they were 'word for word' in that author? It is therefore obvious, Father, that if Jansenius turns out not to have held them, there will be no need to say, as your Fathers did in their examples, that the Pope was mistaken on this point of fact, which it is always embarrassing to admit publicly, but only that you misled the Pope, which no longer shocks anyone now that they really know you.

So you see, Father, that this whole matter is a long way from being able to constitute heresy, but as you want to create one at all costs, you have attempted to divert the question from a point of fact into one of faith, and this is how you do it. 'The Pope,' you say, 'declares that he had condemned Jansenius's doctrine in these Five Propositions; therefore it is an article of faith that Jansenius's doctrine as regards these Five Propositions is heretical, whatever it may be.' This, Father, is a very strange article of faith, that a doctrine is heretical, whatever it may be. What! If, according to Jansenius 'inward grace can be resisted' and if, according to him, it is not true 'that Christ died only for the predestined', is this also to be condemned because he teaches it? Is it to be true in the papal Constitution 'that we are free to do good or evil' and untrue in Jansenius? And how has he incurred the unhappy fate of seeing truth become heresy in his book? Must it not therefore be admitted that he is only heretical in the event of his conforming with the errors condemned, since the papal Constitution is the criterion to be applied to Jansenius for judging what he is according to the relation between them? Thus the question 'whether his doctrine is heretical' will be resolved by the other question of fact 'whether it is in conformity with the natural sense of the Five Propositions', for it is impossible for it not to be heretical if it so conforms, or Catholic if it is contrary to them. For finally, since according to the Pope and bishops 'the Five Propositions are condemned in their natural and proper sense', it is impossible for them to be condemned in Jansenius's sense unless

this is the same as the natural and proper sense, which is a question of fact.

So the question always comes down to this point of fact, from which it cannot by any means be separated and made into one of law. Thus it cannot be made into a matter for heresy; but you might well make it a pretext for persecution, if there were not reason to hope that no one will share your interests enough to follow so unjust a course, or be willing to compel people to sign, as you desire, 'that they condemn these propositions in Jansenius's sense' without explaining what Jansenius's sense is. Few people are prepared to sign a blank profession of faith. Now this would be signing one which you would then fill in exactly as you pleased; since you would be free to interpret as you chose this unexplained sense of Jansenius. Let us then have the explanation first, otherwise you will be forcing on us here another proximate power 'leaving aside all question of meaning'. You know that that never goes down well in the world. People hate ambiguity, especially in matters of faith, where it is only right at least to understand what one is condemning. How could doctors, who are convinced that Jansenius meant nothing but efficacious grace, possibly consent to a declaration that they condemn his doctrine without an explanation of it, since given what they believe about it, from which no one has converted them, this would simply amount to condemning efficacious grace, which cannot be condemned without sinning? Would it not therefore be strangely tyrannical to put them into the unhappy position of having either to become guilty before God, if they signed such a declaration against their conscience, or to be treated as heretics if they refused to do so?

But all this is done with a great air of mystery. All your manoeuvres are political. I shall have to explain why you do not explain this sense of Jansenius. I am only writing in order to disclose your intentions, and to frustrate them by such disclosure. I must therefore inform those who do not know it

that, as your main interest in this dispute is to promote the sufficient grace of your own Molina, you cannot do so without ruining efficacious grace, which is entirely the opposite. But as you see it today backed up in Rome and among all the learned men in the Church, and cannot oppose it in itself, you have decided to attack it without anyone noticing under the name of Jansenius's doctrine. Thus you have had to try and get Jansenius condemned without explanation and in order to succeed you have had to make out that his doctrine is not that of efficacious grace, so that people believe it possible to condemn one without the other. Consequently you are trying today so to persuade those who are not acquainted with that author. This is also what you try yourself, Father, in your *Cavilli*, p. 23, by this subtle argument: 'The Pope has condemned Jansenius's doctrine. Now the Pope has not condemned the doctrine of efficacious grace. Therefore the doctrine of efficacious grace is different from that of Jansenius.' If this proof were conclusive it could likewise be shown that Honorius, and all his supporters, are heretics as follows: 'The Sixth Council condemned Honorius's doctrine. Now the Council did not condemn the Church's doctrine. Therefore Honorius's doctrine is different from that of the Church. Therefore all who defend him are heretics.' It is obvious that that settles nothing, since the Pope only condemned the doctrine of the Five Propositions, which he was given to understand was that of Jansenius.

But no matter, for you will not want to use this argument for long. It will last long enough, feeble as it is, for your needs. You only need it to make those who will not condemn efficacious grace condemn Jansenius without scrupling. Once that is done your argument will soon be forgotten, and since the signature will remain as permanent evidence of Jansenius's condemnation, you will seize the occasion to attack efficacious grace directly by this other, much more solid, argument, which you will formulate when the time comes: 'Jansenius's doctrine,' you will say, 'was condemned by universal subscription

throughout the Church. Now this doctrine is plainly that of efficacious grace,' which you will very easily prove. 'Therefore the doctrine of efficacious grace is condemned on the admission of its defenders.' That is why you propose signing this condemnation of a doctrine without explaining it. This is the benefit you expect to get from these subscriptions. But if your opponents resist, you lay another trap for their refusal. For having skilfully joined the question of faith to that of fact, you refuse to allow them either to separate them or sign one without the other; as they cannot subscribe both together, you will go about spreading it everywhere that they refused both together. Thus, although in fact they only refuse to recognize that Jansenius held the propositions which they condemn, which cannot be heretical of them, you will boldly assert that they refused to condemn the propositions in themselves, and that that is their heresy. This is how you will profit from their refusal, and it will be no less useful to you than their consent would be. Consequently if signatures are exacted they will always fall into your snares, whether they sign or not, and you will get your way in either event, so skilful are you at arranging things so that they always turn out to your advantage, whichever way up they fall.

How well I know you, Father! How sorry I am to see God forsake you to the extent of allowing so fortunate an outcome to such unfortunate conduct! Your happiness deserves pity, and is only to be envied by those who do not know what true happiness is. It is charitable to obstruct the happiness you seek by all your conduct, since you base it solely on lies, and attempt to make people believe one of these two untruths: either that the Church has condemned efficacious grace, or that those who defend it support the five condemned errors. Everyone must therefore be told that efficacious grace has on your own admission not been condemned, and that no one supports these errors, so that people should know that those who refuse to sign what you want exacted from them refuse only because of

fact; and as they are ready to sign the question of faith, this refusal could not make them heretics, since it is certainly a matter of faith that these propositions are heretical, but it will never be a matter of faith that they come from Jansenius. They are innocent of error; that is enough. Perhaps they interpret Jansenius too favourably, but perhaps you do not interpret him favourably enough. I will not go into that. At least I know that according to your precepts you believe yourself able, without sinning, to publish it abroad that he is a heretic, contrary to your own knowledge, whereas by their precepts they could not without sin say that he is Catholic unless they were convinced of it. So they are more sincere than you, Father; they have examined Jansenius more than you; they are no less intelligent than you; therefore they are no less to be credited than you. But come what may of this question of fact, they are certainly Catholic, since it is not necessary in order to be one to say that someone else is not, and without taxing anyone else with error it is enough to clear oneself.

Reverend Father, if you have difficulty in reading this letter because it is not printed in clear enough characters, blame no one but yourself. I cannot get printing privileges as you can. You get them even to attack miracles; I have none even to defend myself. The printers are being constantly harried. You yourself cannot advise me to write more to you under such difficulties, for it is too tiresome to be reduced to printing at Osnabrück.

EIGHTEENTH LETTER
TO THE REVEREND FATHER ANNAT, S.J.
From the copy printed at Cologne

24 March 1657

REVEREND FATHER,

You have long been striving to find some error in your opponents, but I am sure that you will end by admitting that perhaps nothing is so difficult as making heretics of people who are not such, and do everything possible to avoid being so. I showed in my last *Letter* how many heresies you had imputed to them one after the other, because you could not find one which you could maintain for long, so that the only course left to you was to accuse them of heresy for refusing to condemn Jansenius's sense, which you wanted them to condemn without having it explained. You must have been really short of heresies to charge them with to have been reduced to that; for who ever heard of a heresy which could not be expressed? So it was easy to reply by pointing out that if there are no errors in Jansenius it is wrong to condemn him, and that if there are, you should declare them so that people should at least know what is being condemned. Yet you have never been willing to do this, but have tried to strengthen your claim by decrees which did nothing for you, for they contain no explanation at all of Jansenius's sense, said to have been condemned in the Five Propositions. Now this was not the way to settle your disputes. If you both agreed on the true sense of Jansenius, and disagreed only on whether this sense is heretical or not, then the judgements declaring it heretical would touch the real point at issue. But as the great dispute is to define this sense of Jansenius, some saying that all they can see there is the sense of St Augustine and St Thomas, and others that they find some sense there that is heretical but which they do not express, it is clear that a Constitution, which does not say a word about this disagreement

and merely condemns Jansenius's sense in general without explaining it, does not decide any of the things in dispute.

That is why you have been told a hundred times that as your disagreement is solely over this fact, you are never going to settle it except by declaring what you understand by Jansenius's sense. But as you have always obstinately refused to do this, I finally pinned you down in my last *Letter*, in which I explained that there is no little mystery in your attempt to have this sense condemned without explanation, and that your intention was to make this indeterminate condemnation one day fall back on to the doctrine of efficacious grace, by showing that it is nothing but that of Jansenius, which you would not find hard. That compelled you to reply. For if after that you had still obstinately refused to explain the sense, it would have been clear to the least enlightened that your only real quarrel was with efficacious grace, and this would have caused you extreme embarrassment, considering the Church's veneration for so holy a doctrine.

So you have been obliged to declare yourselves, and this is what you have just done by answering my *Letter*, in which I had pointed out to you: 'If Jansenius had, regarding these Five Propositions, any other sense than that of efficacious grace, he had no defenders; but that if he had no other sense than that of efficacious grace, he was without error.' You were unable to deny that, Father, but you make the following distinction, p. 21: 'It is not enough,' you say, 'in order to justify Jansenius to say that he only maintains efficacious grace, because there are two ways of maintaining it: one heretical, according to Calvin, which consists in saying that the will moved by grace has no power to resist; the other orthodox, according to St Thomas and the Sorbonnists, founded on principles established by councils, which is that efficacious grace by itself so governs the will that we always have power to resist it.'

We grant you all that, Father, and you end by saying 'that Jansenius would be Catholic if he defended efficacious grace

according to the Thomists, but he is heretical because he is contrary to the Thomists and in conformity with Calvin, who denies us power to resist grace.' I shall not here examine, Father, the question of fact, whether Jansenius is really in conformity with Calvin. It is enough for me that you claim this and now let us know that by Jansenius's sense you understood nothing but that of Calvin. Was that then, Father, all you meant? Was it only Calvin's error which you wanted to have condemned under the name of Jansenius's sense? Why did you not declare this sooner? You would have saved yourself a lot of trouble, for without bulls and briefs everyone would have joined you in condemning this error. How badly this clarification was needed and how many difficulties it resolves! We did not know, Father, what error the popes and bishops had intended to condemn under the name of Jansenius's sense. The whole Church was most distressed about it, and no one would explain it to us. Now you do so, Father, you whom all your party consider as chief and prime mover in all its counsels, and who know the secret of all this behaviour. You tell us then that this sense of Jansenius is nothing but that of Calvin, condemned by the Council. That clears up a lot of doubts. We now know that the error they intended to condemn under the description of 'Jansenius's sense' is nothing but Calvin's sense, and we thus remain obedient to their decrees by condemning with them this sense of Calvin which they wanted to condemn. We are no longer astonished to see that the popes and some bishops have so zealously opposed Jansenius's sense. How could they have failed to do so, Father, when they believed those who publicly affirm that this sense is the same as that of Calvin?

I therefore declare, Father, that you have nothing further to criticize in your opponents because they certainly detest what you detest. I am only amazed to see that you were unaware of it and so ill acquainted with their views on the subject which they have so often declared in their works. I am convinced that if

you were better informed you would regret not being instructed with a peaceable spirit in so pure and Christian a doctrine, which passion makes you attack without knowing. You would see, Father, that they not only hold that one can resist those weak movements of grace, so-called excitant or inefficacious grace, by not performing the good which they inspire, but that they are also as firm in upholding against Calvin the will's power to resist even efficacious and victorious grace, as in defending against Molina the power of this grace over the will, being equally jealous of each of these truths. They know only too well that man, of his very nature, always has the power to sin and to resist grace, and that since his corruption he bears within him an unfortunate residue of concupiscence which enormously increases this power; but yet that, when it pleases God to touch man by his mercy, he makes him do what he wants and in the way he wants. Yet this infallibility of God's operation in no way impairs man's natural liberty, through the secret and wonderful ways in which God effects this change, so excellently explained by St Augustine, and which dispel all the imaginary contradictions conceived by the enemies of efficacious grace to exist between the sovereign power of grace over free will and the ability of free will to resist grace. For, according to this great saint, who has been set up by popes and the Church as a rule in this matter, God changes man's heart by a heavenly sweetness which he infuses and which, surpassing fleshly delights, fills man, who realizes on the one hand his mortality and nothingness and on the other discovers God's greatness and eternity, with a distaste for the delights of sin, which separate him from incorruptible good; and finding his greatest joy in the God who enchants him, he infallibly inclines towards him of his own accord by a movement at once wholly free, voluntary and full of love; so that it would be a pain and punishment to be cut off from him. Not that he is not always able to withdraw, and would in fact do so if he wanted to; but how could he want to, since the will invariably inclines towards what gives

it greatest pleasure and nothing pleases it as much as this unique good, including within itself all other goods? '*Quod enim amplius nos delectat, secundum id operemur necesse est,*' as St Augustine says.

This is how God disposes of man's free will without imposing any necessity, and how free will, which can always resist grace but does not always wish to do so, inclines no less freely than infallibly towards God, when he wishes to attract it by the sweetness of his efficacious inspiration.

These, Father, are the divine principles of St Augustine and St Thomas, according to which it is true that 'we can resist grace' against Calvin's opinion, and yet, as Pope Clement VIII says in a work addressed to the Congregation *de Auxiliis*: 'God creates in us the movement of our will and disposes efficaciously of our hearts, by the dominion which his supreme Majesty has over the wills of men as over all other creatures under heaven, according to St Augustine.'

According to these same principles we act of our own accord, and consequently acquire merits which are genuinely our own, against Calvin's error; and yet as God is the first principle of our actions, 'working in us what is well pleasing in his sight' as St Paul says [Heb. XIII, 21], 'our merits are gifts of God,' as the Council of Trent says.

This has destroyed Luther's impiety, condemned by the same council, 'that we do not co-operate in any way in our salvation, any more than inanimate things;' and it has also destroyed the impiety of Molina's school, which will not recognize that it is the force of grace itself which effects our cooperation in the work of our salvation, and thus ruins the principle of faith established by St Paul 'that it is God who worketh in us both the will and the deed'.

Finally it is by this means that all these apparently contradictory passages of Scripture are reconciled: 'Return unto the Lord' [Hos. XIV, 1]; 'Turn us again, o God' [Ps. LXXX, 3]; 'Cast away from you all your transgressions' [Ez. XVIII, 31]; 'Lord,

thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people' [Ps. LXXXIV, 2]; 'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance' [Matt. III, 8]; 'Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us' [Is. XXVI, 12]: 'Make you a new heart and a new spirit' [Ez. XVIII, 31]; 'A new heart will I give you and a new spirit put within you.' [Ez. XXXVI, 26]

The only way of reconciling these apparent contradictions which ascribe our good deeds now to God and now to ourselves is to recognize that, as St Augustine says, 'our deeds are our own, because of the free will producing them, and they are also God's, because of his grace, causing our free will to produce them'. And as he says elsewhere, God makes us do what he pleases by making us desire what we might not desire: '*a Deo factum est ut vellent quod et nolle potuissent.*'

Thus, Father, your opponents are in complete agreement with the neo-Thomists, since the Thomists hold like them both the power of resisting grace and the infallible effect of grace, which they profess to uphold so highly, according to this basic precept of their doctrine, which Alvarez, one of the most important of them, so often repeats in his book and expresses as follows, disp. 72, n. 74: 'When efficacious grace moves free will it invariably consents, because the effect of grace is to bring it about that although it might not consent, yet in fact it does so'; the reason he gives for this is the following, from his master, St Thomas: 'The will of God cannot fail to be fulfilled; thus when he wishes someone to consent to grace, he consents invariably and indeed necessarily, not from absolute necessity, but from a necessity of infallibility.' In this grace does not impair 'the power to resist if one wishes', since it only makes us not wish to resist, as your Father Petau acknowledges in these terms, vol. I, p. 602: 'The grace of Jesus Christ makes us persevere in piety infallibly, but not from necessity. For we can withhold consent if we wish, as the Council says; but this same grace makes us not wish to do so.'

This, Father, is the consistent doctrine of St Augustine, St Prosper, of the Fathers who followed them, of the councils, of

St Thomas and all the Thomists in general. It is also that of your opponents, although you did not believe this, and finally it is what you have yourself just approved in these terms: 'the doctrine of efficacious grace, which recognizes that we have the power to resist it, is orthodox, based on councils and maintained by Thomists and Sorbonnists.' Tell the truth, Father; if you had known that your opponents really do hold this doctrine perhaps the interests of your Company would have prevented you from giving it such public approval, but imagining that they were opposed to it, the same interests of your Company led you to support opinions which you believed contrary to theirs, and, by this mistake, in trying to ruin their principles you have yourself fully established them. Consequently we now see, by some kind of prodigy, the defenders of efficacious grace justified by the defenders of Molina; so wondrous are the ways of God in making all things contribute to the glory of his truth!

Let all therefore take note, by your own declaration, that this truth of efficacious grace, necessary for all acts of piety, which is so dear to the Church and is the price of her Saviour's blood, is so consistently Catholic that there is not a single Catholic, even including the Jesuits, who does not recognize it as orthodox. At the same time they will know, from your own confession, that there is not the slightest suspicion of error in those whom you have so freely accused of it. For when you imputed to them hidden errors which you would not disclose, it was as difficult for them to defend themselves as it was easy for you to accuse them in this way. Now that you have just declared that this error which obliges you to attack them is that of Calvin, which you believed them to maintain, everyone can see clearly that they are free from all error, because they are so opposed to the only one you impute to them, and protest in all they say, or write, and in everything they can produce as evidence of their opinions, that they wholeheartedly condemn this heresy, just as the Thomists do,

whom you readily acknowledge as Catholics and who have never been suspected of not being so.

So what will you say against them now, Father? That although they do not accept Calvin's sense, they are still heretics, because they will not recognize that Jansenius's sense is the same as Calvin's? Would you venture to say that this is matter for heresy? Is it not purely a question of fact, which cannot constitute heresy? It would certainly be a heresy to say that we have no power to resist efficacious grace, but is it one to doubt whether Jansenius maintains this? Is this a revealed truth? Is this an article of faith to be believed on pain of damnation? Or is it not, in spite of you, a point of fact, for which it would be absurd to pretend that there are heretics in the Church?

So stop calling them by such a name, Father, and give them some other more appropriate to the nature of your disagreement. Say that they are ignorant and stupid, and do not understand Jansenius properly; such criticism would be well suited to your dispute; but to call them heretics is out of all proportion. As it is the only injury from which I wish to defend them, I shall not go to much trouble proving that they understand Jansenius perfectly well. All I will say about that is that it seems to me, Father, that if he is judged by your own rules it is hard to take him for anything but a Catholic; for this is what you lay down in order to examine him:

'To discover,' you say, 'whether Jansenius is covered, we must know whether he defends efficacious grace like Calvin, who denies us any power to resist it; or like the Thomists, who admit such power; for in that case he would be Catholic.' See then, Father, whether he holds that we have power to resist when he says in whole treatises, among others in vol. III, book 8, ch. xx: 'That we always have the power to resist grace, according to the Council: THAT FREE WILL IS ALWAYS ABLE TO ACT AND NOT ACT, to wish and not wish, to consent and not consent, to do good or evil, and that in this life man always has these two freedoms, which you call of contraries and contra-

diction.' See too whether he is not contrary to Calvin's error, as you yourself represent it, showing as he does throughout ch. xxi 'that the Church has condemned this heretic who maintains that efficacious grace does not act on free will as has so long been believed in the Church, that is, so that it is in the power of free will to consent or not; whereas, according to St Augustine and the Council we always have the power not to consent if we so wish; and according to St Prosper God gives even his elect the will to persevere in such a way as not to take from them the ability to desire the contrary.' Judge finally whether he is not in agreement with the Thomists when he declares, ch. iv: 'that all that the Thomists have written to reconcile the efficacity of grace with the power to resist it conforms so closely with his views, that one need only look at their books to learn what he thinks about it. *Quod ipsi dixerunt, dictum puta.*'

That is how he speaks under all these heads, and this is what leads me to think that he believes in the power to resist grace; that he is contrary to Calvin, and in conformity with the Thomists, because he says so; and is thus a Catholic according to you. If you have some other way of finding out an author's meaning than from his expressions, and if, without quoting any passages from him, you want to maintain against all his words that he denies the power to resist and is for Calvin against the Thomists, do not fear, Father, that I shall accuse you of heresy for that: I shall simply say that you do not seem to understand Jansenius very well, but we shall be none the less children of the same Church.

How is it then, Father, that in this disagreement you behave so passionately, and treat as your cruellest enemies and the most dangerous of heretics those whom you are unable to accuse of any error, or of anything but failing to understand Jansenius like you? For what are you disputing but this author's sense? You want them to condemn it, but they ask what you mean by it. You say that you mean Calvin's error; they answer that they

condemn it. Thus if you are not just quarrelling with the syllables but what they stand for, you should be satisfied. If they refuse to say that they condemn Jansenius's sense, it is because they believe it to be that of St Thomas. This phrase is thus quite ambiguous between you; in your mouth it signifies Calvin's sense, in theirs that of St Thomas, with the result that, as your different ideas about the same term are the cause of all your divisions, if I were presiding over your disputes, I should forbid either side to mention the word Jansenius. In that way, by expressing only what you mean by it, it would be evident that all you ask is for condemnation of Calvin's sense, to which they consent, and all they ask for is support of St Augustine's and St Thomas's sense, on which you are all agreed.

I therefore declare, Father, that for my part I shall always hold them to be Catholic, whether they condemn Jansenius if they find him guilty of errors, or do not condemn him because all they can find in him is what you yourself declare to be Catholic; and I shall speak to them as St Jerome spoke to John, Bishop of Jerusalem, who was charged with holding eight propositions of Origen: 'Either condemn Origen,' said that saint, 'if you recognize that he held these errors, or deny that he held them. *Aut nega hoc dixisse eum qui arguitur; aut, si locutus est talia, eum damna qui dixerit.*'

That, Father, is how people behave who are only attacking errors and not persons; whereas you, who attack persons more than errors, think it nothing to condemn the errors unless the persons are condemned to whom you try to impute them.

What violent behaviour, Father, but how unlikely to succeed! I have told you before, and I tell you again, violence and truth have no power over each other. Never were your charges more outrageous, never was the innocence of your opponents more widely known: never was efficacious grace more cunningly attacked, never have we seen it so firmly established. You strain every effort to make people believe that your disputes are over points of faith, and it has never been

more evident that your whole dispute is simply over a point of fact. Finally you move heaven and earth to make people believe that this point of fact is genuine, and people have never been more inclined to doubt it. The reason is quite simple. It is, Father, that you do not take the natural course for making people believe a point of fact, which is to convince the senses and point out in a book the words claimed to be there. But you invent methods so remote from such simplicity that even the dullest are inevitably struck by it. Why did you not adopt the same course I used in my *Letters* to disclose the many evil precepts of your authors, which is faithfully to quote the passages from which they come? That is what the parish-clergy of Paris have done, and it never fails to convince. But what would you have said, and what would people have thought, when, for example, they criticized you for this proposition of Father L'Amy: 'That a religious may kill someone threatening to publish slanders against himself or his community when he has no other means of protecting himself,' if they had not quoted the passage where it comes in express terms, and if they had met every request to do so with obstinate refusal and had instead gone to Rome to obtain a bull ordering everyone to acknowledge it? Would it not undoubtedly have been considered that they had tricked the Pope, and had resorted to such an extraordinary method only for want of the natural methods with which factual truths provide those who maintain them? Thus they merely pointed out that Father L'Amy teaches this doctrine 'in vol. v, disp. 36, n. 118, p. 554 of the Douai edition', and so anyone who wanted to look it up found it there, and no one was left in any doubt. What a simple and ready way of settling questions of fact when one is in the right!

So why, Father, do you not do the same? You said in your *Cavilli* 'that the Five Propositions are in Jansenius word for word, wholly, explicitly, *totidem verbis*.' You were told that they were not. What was to be done about it but either to quote the page, if you had really seen them, or admit that you

had made a mistake? Yet you do neither, but instead, realizing perfectly well that all the texts of Jansenius which you sometimes adduce to dazzle people are not 'the individual and particular condemned propositions' which you had undertaken to show in his book, you present us with Constitutions declaring that the propositions are extracted from it, without showing where.

I know, Father, what respect Christians owe the Holy See, and your opponents have given enough evidence of their firm resolve never to fall short in this. But do not imagine that it would be lack of respect to represent to the Pope, with all the submissiveness owed by children to their father and members to the head, that he may have been caught unawares on this point of fact; that he has not had it examined since becoming Pope, and that his predecessor Innocent x had only had these propositions examined to see whether they were heretical, but not whether they were by Jansenius (which made the Commissary of the Holy Office, one of the chief examiners, say 'that they could not be censured in the sense of any author: *Non sunt qualificabiles in sensu proferentis*, because they had been submitted for examination in themselves, and without considering who might be their author: *in abstracto, et ut praescindunt ab omni proferenti*,' as can be seen from their recently published opinions); that more than sixty doctors and a great many other learned and pious men have carefully read this book without ever finding them there, and have found contrary ones; that those who gave the Pope this impression may well have abused his trust in them, interested as they are in disparaging this author who convicted Molina of more than fifty errors; that what makes such a thing more credible is that they have this precept, one of the most authoritative of their theology, 'that they may without sin slander those by whom they believe themselves wrongfully attacked'; thus, as their evidence is so suspect and that of the others so considerable, there are grounds for begging His Holiness, with all possible humility, to have this fact examined in the presence of doctors from both sides, so that a

solemn and regular decision can be formulated. 'Let competent judges be assembled,' said St Basil on a similar subject, *Ep. 75*, 'let everyone be free; let my writings be examined; let them see whether there are any errors against the faith; let the objections and replies be read, so that judgement shall be pronounced on the basis of full knowledge and in due form, and not defamation without examination.'

Do not attempt, Father, to make out that people who act like this are lacking in loyalty to the Holy See. The popes are very far from treating Christians with the tyranny which others would like to exercise in their name. 'The Church,' says St Gregory, Pope, *On Job*, book 8, ch. i, 'which has been trained in the school of humility, does not impose her teaching by authority on those of her children whom she believes to be involved in some error, but wins them over by reason: *recta quae errantibus dicit, non quasi ex auctoritate praecipit, sed ex ratione persuadet.*' Far from regarding it as dishonourable to revise a judgement in which they had been caught off guard, on the contrary they take pride in so doing, as St Bernard shows, *Ep. 180*: 'The Apostolic See,' he says, 'has this to be said for it, that it does not stand on its dignity and is always quite willing to withdraw anything that it has been tricked into saying; indeed it is quite right that no one should profit by injustice, especially before the Holy See.'

These, Father, are the true sentiments with which the popes should be imbued; since all theologians agree that they may be caught off guard, and far from being preserved from such a thing by their supreme office, they are all the more exposed to it thereby because of the numerous affairs dividing their attention. The same St Gregory says this to some people who were astonished that another pope had allowed himself to be deceived: 'Why do you wonder,' he says, book 1, *Dial.*, 'that we are deceived, we who are men? Have you not seen David, the king with the spirit of prophecy, believing in the impostures of Sheba and giving an unjust judgement against the

son of Jonathan? Who then will find it strange that impostors sometimes catch us off guard, we who are not prophets? We are overwhelmed by a mass of business, and our spirit, being divided between so many things, is less attentive to each particular one, and consequently more easily deceived on a given matter.' I really think, Father, that the popes know better than you whether they may be caught off guard or not. They themselves declare that popes and the greatest kings are more liable to be deceived than people with less important occupations. We must take their word for it. It is quite easy to imagine the methods employed to catch them off guard. St Bernard describes it in a letter to Innocent II as follows: 'There is nothing astonishing or novel in the fact that man's spirit can deceive and be deceived. Some religious have come to you in a spirit of falsehood and illusion. They have spoken to you against a bishop whom they hate, and whose life has been exemplary. These people bite like dogs and try to pass off good as evil. Meanwhile, Holy Father, you are angry with your son. Why do you give his enemies such cause for joy? Do not believe every spirit, but verify that the spirits are from God. I hope that once you know the truth all that was based on a false report will fade away. I pray the spirit of truth to give you grace to separate light from darkness, and to condemn evil in order to promote good.' You see then, Father, that the popes' eminence does not render them immune from surprises, but merely makes such surprises more dangerous and important. St Bernard points this out to Pope Eugenius, *On Consideration*, book 2, last chapter: 'There is another fault so general that I have never seen any of the world's great ones avoid it. It is, Holy Father, excessive credulity, origin of so much trouble. For it gives rise to violent persecutions against the innocent, unjust prejudices against the absent, and terrible rages all for nothing, *pro nihilo*. This, Holy Father, is a universal evil, and if you are free from it, I should say that you are the only one of your brethren to enjoy such an advantage.'

I trust, Father, that you are beginning to be convinced by this that popes are liable to be taken off guard. But to prove it completely I shall simply remind you of examples quoted in your own book of popes and emperors who have indeed been caught out by heretics. For you say that Apollinaris took Pope Damasus unawares, just as Celestius did Zosimus. You say too that a certain Athanasius deceived the Emperor Heraclius, and induced him to persecute Catholics, and finally that Sergius obtained from Honorius the decree burnt at the Sixth Council, 'by playing,' you say, 'the trusty servant to the pope.'

It is therefore a fact established by yourself, Father, that those who behave like this to kings and popes sometimes cunningly induce them to persecute those who defend the truth of the faith under the impression that they are persecuting heretics. Hence the popes, who detest nothing so much as such deceptions, have made an ecclesiastical law out of a letter by Alexander III, and inserted it in Canon Law, permitting suspension of execution of their bulls and decrees when they are thought to have been deceived. 'If we sometimes,' says this pope to the Archbishop of Ravenna, 'send to your Fraternity decrees which cause you consternation, do not worry. For you will either reverently execute them or let us know why you think you should not do so, because we shall approve if you do not execute a decree extracted from us by surprise and cunning.' Such is the behaviour of popes who seek only to clear up differences between Christians and not to follow the passions of those who wish to stir up trouble. They are not dictatorial, as St Peter and St Paul say after Jesus Christ, but the spirit apparent in all their conduct is that of peace and truth. This is why they usually insert into their letters this clause, which is always understood: '*Si ita est; si preces veritate nitantur.* If things are as we are given to understand; if the facts are correct.' It is obvious from this that as the popes give force to their bulls only inasmuch as they are based on correct facts, the bulls alone do not

prove the facts true, but on the contrary, according even to the canonists, the truth of the facts makes the bulls acceptable.

How then do we learn the truth about facts? From our eyes, Father, which are the rightful judges of fact, as reason is of natural and intelligible things, and faith of things supernatural and revealed. For since you oblige me to do so, Father, let me tell you that in the opinion of two of the greatest doctors of the Church, SS. Augustine and Thomas, these three principles of our knowledge each have separate objects, and certainty within that range. As God has desired to use the senses as an intermediary for letting in faith, '*Fides ex auditu*: Faith cometh by hearing' [Rom. x, 17], faith is so far from destroying the certainty of the senses that it would on the contrary destroy faith to try and cast doubt on the faithful evidence of the senses. That is why St Thomas expressly remarks that God wished the sensible accidents to remain in the Eucharist so that the senses, which only judge accidents, should not be deceived: '*Ut sensus a deceptione reddantur immunes.*'

He explains this by the example of the passage in Genesis where it is written: 'God created two great lights, the sun and the moon, and the stars also,' by which Scripture seems to infer that the moon is greater than all the stars; but because it is established by unquestionable demonstrations that this is untrue, we must not, says this saint, obstinately defend this literal meaning, but look for some other consistent with the factual truth, saying, for instance, 'that the expression "great light" only indicates the size of the moon's light as regards us, and not the size of its mass in itself.'

If we tried to act otherwise, we should not be winning respect for Scripture, but on the contrary exposing it to the scorn of the ungodly: 'because,' as St Augustine says, 'once they knew that we believe things in Scripture which they know perfectly well to be untrue, they would laugh at our credulity in other things which are more mysterious, like the resurrection of the dead and eternal life.' 'Thus,' adds St Thomas, 'we

should be making our religion an object for their scorn, and indeed closing the door on their conversion.'

It would also be, Father, a means of closing the door on heretics, and making the Pope's authority the object of their scorn, to refuse to admit as Catholics those who will not believe that words are in a book where they are not to be found, just because the Pope has declared so inadvertently. For nothing but examination of a book can establish that words are there. Matters of fact can only be proved by the senses. If what you maintain is correct, prove it; otherwise do not call on anyone to make people believe it: it would be a waste of time. All the powers in the world can no more persuade people of a point of fact by using their authority than they can alter it, for nothing can bring it about that what is, is not.

It was for example in vain that the religious of Ratisbon obtained from Pope St Leo IX a solemn decree, by which he declared that the body of St Denis, first Bishop of Paris, commonly held to be the Areopagite, had been removed from France and brought to the church of their monastery. That does not alter the fact that the body of the saint has always been and still is in the celebrated abbey which bears his name, where you would find it hard to get the bull accepted, although the Pope asserts in it that he had examined the matter 'with all possible diligence, *diligentissime*; and on the advice of many bishops and prelates; so that he strictly obliges all the French, *districte praecipientes*, to recognize and confess that they no longer possess these holy relics.' Yet the French, who know this fact to be untrue from the evidence of their own eyes, and who had opened the shrine and found all the relics intact, as contemporary historians attest, believed then, as has always been believed since, the opposite of what this holy pope had enjoined them to believe, knowing very well that even saints and prophets are liable to be deceived.

It was in vain too that you obtained from Rome the decree against Galileo, which condemned his opinion regarding the

earth's movement. It will take more than that to prove that it keeps still, and if there were consistent observations proving that it is the earth that goes round, all the men in the world put together could not stop it turning, or themselves turning with it. Do not imagine either that Pope Zachary's letters excommunicating St Virgil for maintaining the existence of Antipodes have annihilated this new world, or that, though the Pope had declared that this opinion constituted a very dangerous error, the King of Spain was not better off for believing Christopher Columbus, who had just come back, than the judgement of the Pope, who had never been there; or that the Church did not derive great benefit from this, since it provided so many peoples with knowledge of the Gospel who would otherwise have perished in their paganism.

So you see, Father, the nature of factual matters, and the principles by which they should be judged, whence it is a simple conclusion about our subject that if the Five Propositions are not by Jansenius, they cannot possibly have been extracted from his book, and the only way to judge this properly and convince people is to examine the book at a regular conference, as you have been asked to do for so long. Until then you have no right to call your opponents obstinate, for they will be blameless on this point of fact as they are without error on the point of faith: Catholics on the point of law, reasonable on that of fact, innocent in both.

Who then can fail to be astonished, Father, at seeing on the one hand such full vindication, and on the other such violent accusations? Who would think that the only question between you is a fact of no importance, which you are trying to make people believe without proof? Who would dare to imagine that all this fuss is being made in the Church about nothing, '*pro nihilo*,' Father, as St Bernard says? But this indeed is the main ruse you employ, to make people believe that all is at stake when in fact nothing is; and to make out to the powerful persons who listen to you that your disputes are concerned

with Calvin's most pernicious errors and the most important principles of the faith, so that they should, under that impression, devote all their zeal and authority to opposing those whom you attack, as if the safety of the Christian religion depended on it, whereas if they ever realized that all that is at issue is this minor point of fact, it would leave them quite unmoved, and they would on the contrary be very sorry to have made such efforts in support of your private passions in a matter of no consequence for the Church.

For in fact, to take things at their worst, even if it were true that Jansenius held these propositions, what harm would it do for a few people to doubt it, so long as they detest them, as they publicly assert? Is it not enough that these propositions are condemned by everyone without exception in the very sense in which you have explained that you want them condemned? Would they be any the more censured if Jansenius was stated to have held them? What good would it do then to demand this acknowledgement, except to disparage a doctor and bishop who died in the communion of the Church? I cannot see that it is so great a good that it must be bought at the cost of so much trouble. What concern is it of the State, the Pope, bishops, doctors, the whole Church? It does not affect them in any way, Father, and it is only your Society which would really derive any pleasure from such defamation of an author who has done you some harm. Yet everything is in turmoil because you make out that everything is threatened. This is the secret cause setting off all these great agitations which would stop as soon as the true nature of your disputes was known. That is why, as the peace of the Church depends on having this point cleared up, it was extremely important to do so, so that with all your subterfuges exposed it should be clear to all that your accusations are without foundation, your opponents without error and the Church without heresy.

This, Father, is the good I have endeavoured to procure, and it seems to me so important for the whole of religion that I find

it hard to understand how those to whom you give such cause to speak out can remain silent. Even if the injuries you do them did not affect them, those suffered by the Church, it seems to me, ought to induce them to protest; apart from the fact that I doubt whether ecclesiastics may abandon their reputation to slander, especially in matters of faith. Yet they let you say whatever you please, so that if you had not accidentally given me the chance, there would perhaps have been no opposition to the scandalous impressions which you put about on all sides. Thus their patience amazes me, all the more as I cannot suspect it of being due to timidity or weakness, knowing as I do that they do not lack for arguments in their defence or zeal for the truth. Yet I see them keep so religious a silence, that I am afraid they are overdoing it. For my part, Father, I do not feel able to do the same. Leave the Church in peace, and I will gladly leave you alone. But while you only endeavour to foment strife, the children of peace will be obliged to devote all their energies to keeping the peace.

FRAGMENT OF A NINETEENTH LETTER

If I occasioned you some displeasure in my other *Letters* by demonstrating the innocence of those whose disgrace you were anxious to encompass, I will bring you joy with this one by showing how much grief you have caused them. Console yourself, Father, those whom you hate are in great distress. If the Bishops follow out your advice in their dioceses and compel people to sign and swear that they believe in a matter of fact, which they do not truly believe and are not obliged to believe, you will reduce your opponents to the depths of sorrow at seeing the Church in such a state. I have seen them, Father, and I confess that it gave me the greatest satisfaction. I saw in them no philosophical generosity, nor that disrespectful obstinacy which makes people imperiously perform what they believe to be their duty; none of the slack and timid cowardice which prevents people from seeing and following the truth, but I found them full of gentle, solid piety, distrust of themselves, respect for the powers of the Church, love of peace, affection and zeal for truth, the desire to know and defend it, fear of their own infirmity, regret at finding themselves so sorely tried, but yet hopeful that God will deign to uphold them with his light and his strength, and that the grace of Jesus Christ, which they uphold and for which they suffer, will itself be their light and their strength.

I found them surrounded by persons of their acquaintance, who had come about the same subject, in an attempt to bring them to do what seemed best in the present state of affairs. I heard the advice they were given: I observed how they took it and their answers: but truly, Father, if you had been present, I think that you yourself would admit that their whole behaviour is as far as could be from any suggestion of rebellion or heresy, as everyone will be able to see from the way they have

compromised, as you will see here, for the sake of preserving at once the two things they hold infinitely dear, peace and truth.

For after it had been pointed out to them what penalties they would incur by a refusal if the new Constitution was presented for them to sign, and the scandal which might result in the Church, they remarked . . .

PASCAL

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Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer

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